Keith Murray, industrial designer, his place in British inter-war design

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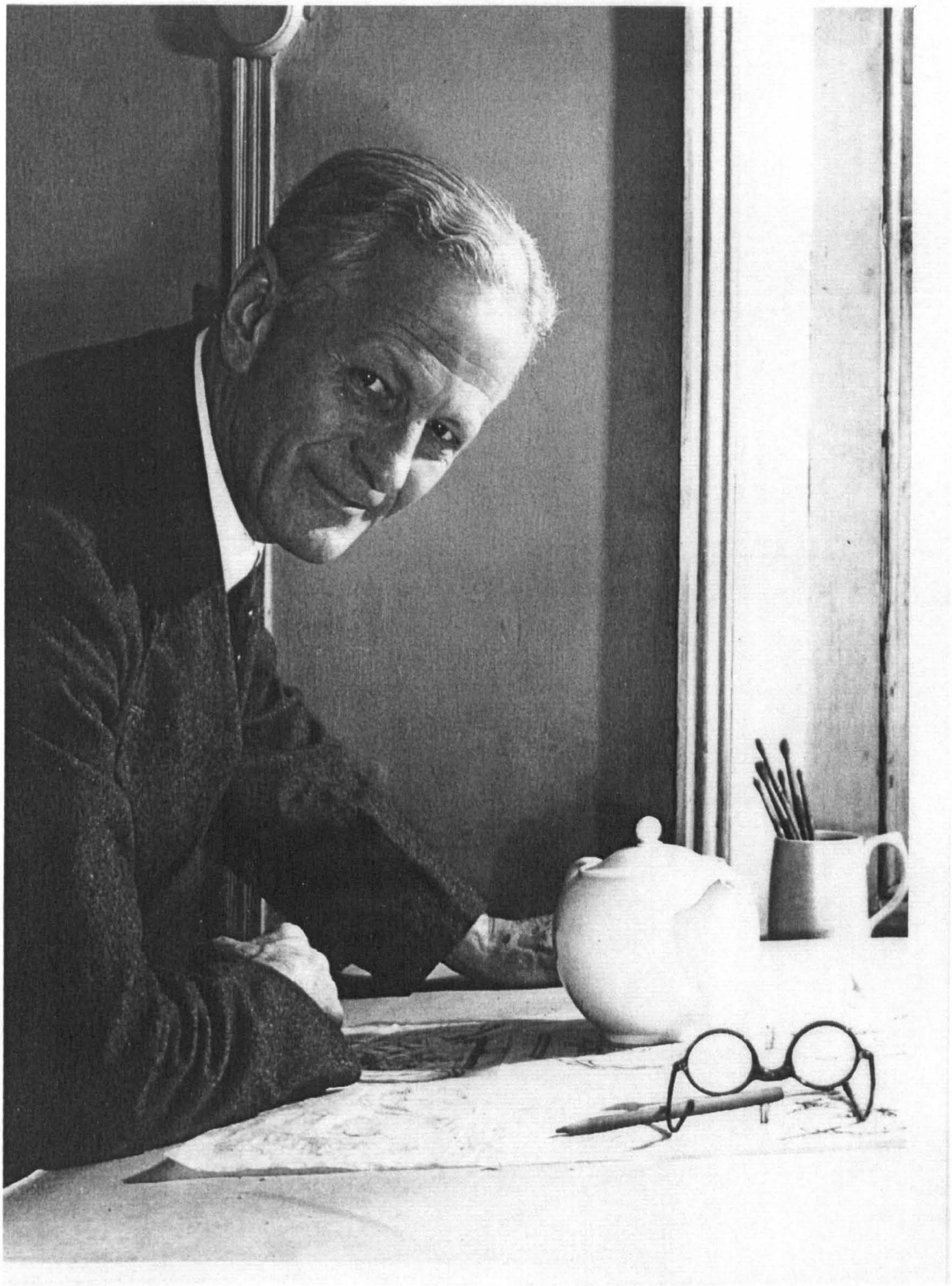

Keith Murray at Wedgwood c.1946

Abstract

This thesis constitutes an investigation of Keith Murray's design methodology and practice as a freelance designer for industry (c. 1932 – 1940). In the course of five chapters it aims to critically evaluate his significance as a British designer of the inter-war period and at the same time to examine and critique the over-arching Modernist theoretical framework which has pervaded earlier accounts and assessments of his work, (including Murray's own). Thus the first chapter identifies pivotal positions in the Modernist spectrum which justifies the study's more complex conceptualisation of the Modern Movement in design as a set of ideas advancing progressive or 'non-traditional' design.

Chapters Two and Three draw upon a diverse range of primary sources including economic data relating to the performance of both the ceramics and glass industries (c. 1926 – 1939) to illuminate the actualities of designing for specific British manufacturing firms during a period in which manufacturers increasingly turned to design as one of several strategies to beat the world recession. By comparing Murray's experience at the glassmakers, Stevens & Williams and the pottery firm of Wedgwood, it recognises key problems encountered by the new type of non-specialist designer, whose design methodology was hypothetically transferable across different media, across different types of company and across different industries. Chapter Four examines variations relating to firstly, how Modernist design was interpreted by Murray as a practitioner and secondly how it was disseminated both within the spectrum of design reform interests and also in the commercial field. Critical analysis of the latter has revealed a parallel discourse in which Modernist design was promulgated in terms of an emergent culture of consumption. Case studies in Chapter Five use examples of Murray's work in ceramics, glass and metal to analyse inconsistencies between his theory and practice. A conclusion reflects on the constituents of the study's more complex contextualised framework in which Murray's praxis as a designer is analysed and considers themes and approaches for further research.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge those colleagues from De Montfort University, both past and present, whose knowledge and support has helped me to undertake the research and writing of this thesis. So my profound thanks go to Professor Pat Kirkham, Professor Janet Myles, Dr Christine Boydell and Dr John Martin.

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It is important to acknowledge the invaluable industry knowledge conveyed to me in conversations and interviews by individuals who were associated with the design and production of Keith Murray's designs, some of whom are now deceased. It was both a pleasure and a privilege to share the recollections of Reginald Williams-Thomas, Sam Thompson and Gilbert Hill formerly of Stevens & Williams; Norman Wilson and Harry Walker formerly of Wedgwood and Stan Eveson formerly of Thomas Webb.

Finally, my thanks go to colleagues, family members and friends for their encouragement and support. I wish to acknowledge and thank Tom Taylor for his help in preparing tables; Faith Taylor for making image files to illustrate the thesis; Terry Bull for his diligent proof-reading and moral support and Kay Owen and Roy Jessop for help with proof reading.

Thank you all,

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Abbreviations:

DIA - Design and Industries Association

KMD Book- Keith Murray Works Description Book

NAL – National Art Library

PGGTR – Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review

(F) RIBA – (Fellow) Royal Institute of British Architects

V&A - Victoria & Albert Museum, London

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Introduction

Keith Murray, Royal Designer for Industry

Keith Murray, FRIBA, RDI (1892 – 1981) was one of the most important British designers of glass, ceramics and silver of the inter-war period. He is best known for his designs in glass for the long-established Stourbridge glassmakers, Stevens & Williams Ltd,[1] (c1932 –1939) and his ceramic designs for Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd., hereafter Wedgwood, (c. 1932 – c.1948). He also designed a small range of domestic silver and silver plate for the Royal Silversmiths, Mappin & Webb Ltd. (c.1934 –1935).[2] Contemporary critics and commentators recognised his achievement in bringing design based on Modern Movement principles to some of the most conservative and tradition-bound sectors of British manufacturing industry.

Murray's contribution to design was given public and official recognition in 1936 when he was in the very first cohort of British designers to be awarded the distinction, Designer for Industry, (DI).[3] Despite his success Murray's career as a freelance designer was short-lived; indeed most of his work for these three media was executed between 1932 and 1939. It represented an interval in his life-long career as a professional architect and came about because of a major slump in building commissions. During the Second World War he served with the RAF and also re-established his principal career as an architect of industrial buildings. This left him very little time for design work and as a consequence, his fame as a note-worthy designer declined in the post-war period.[4]

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[1] Stevens & Williams Ltd. renamed the firm Royal Brierley Crystal in 1931 following the acquisition of a Royal Warrant. In the 1930s the firm still used both names. Throughout this thesis, I will use the name by which the firm was discussed in design circles, i.e. Stevens & Williams Ltd. However the reader will note that certain of the firm's advertisements of the period illustrated in this thesis are for Royal Brierley Crystal, the name by which the firm became better known after the Second World War.

[2] Now part of the Garrard Group

[3] The award was instituted by the Royal Society of Arts. In 1938 it was granted Royal Status and became RDI.

[4] See Appendix I for a detailed biographical account of Keith Murray.

The Study: Scope, Limitations and Problems

Designs in three media

This study critically analyses Murray's career as a 'progressive' designer in three media, ceramics, glass and metal in the context of design reform and in particular the emergent and influential Modern Movement in design in Britain during the inter-war period. Research for this thesis focussed on Murray's designs in ceramics for Wedgwood and in glass for Stevens & Williams, although there are frequent references throughout and especially in the relevant case studies to Murray's designs in silver plate and silver for Mappin & Webb. The principal factor which justifies this bias is the longer duration of Murray's working relationship with these two firms and the consequent greater quantity of designs produced but there are two other important considerations. Firstly, glass was the medium through which Murray first formulated his ideas for new aesthetic approaches inspired by contemporary Swedish examples and for industrial design practice based on Modern Movement principles. Secondly, in his long working relationship with Wedgwood, as designer c.1932 – c.1948 and from 1936 in the capacity of consultant architect, Murray developed a thorough understanding of modern industrial production methods that influenced his career in both architecture and design.[5]

By contrast, Murray was only commissioned to design a small range for Mappin & Webb, in the likely hope that the Selection Committee for the prestigious *British Art in Industry* exhibition (1935) would look favourably upon innovative designs by this respected contemporary designer. However, there is a lack of archival reference and surviving objects relating to this period of the firm's history.[6] The sparse evidence indicates that Murray's designs in silver and silver plate were produced in very small quantities and possibly were only made as prototypes for the exhibition. Whatever the case, this seems to have been a single commission from which only a small number of individual designs was

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[5] In 1936, Murray was appointed architect in partnership with Charles White, for a new factory and administration block for Wedgwood to be built outside of Stoke-on-Trent.

[6] There is only one surviving piece in a public collection that can be unequivocally attributed to Keith Murray namely a silver cup and cover with ivory finial designed by Murray and manufactured by Mappin & Webb in 1934 in the collection of The Worshipful Society of Goldsmiths, London. It is illustrated and discussed in Chapter Five.

produced in comparison with Murray's more sustained work and design output for both Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood.

Modern Movement emphasis

An awareness of the many prejudices and biases of critics and historians has informed this study, expanded more fully in the historiographical section that follows. An evaluation of Murray's contribution to the Modern Movement in design in Britain is problematised by the lack of analytical rigour of those contemporary critics and writers who assessed Murray's designs on the basis of a certain set of aesthetic considerations. These were simplicity of form, a tendency towards geometric form, unblemished finish and either no ornamentation or restrained decoration of a mechanistic character, which they believed was the honest expression of their factory origins. The assumption was frequently made that because Murray's designs were factory–made, they were of necessity produced by modern machine methods. The problem, and this is true of many accounts of Modern Movement architecture and design of the inter-war period, is that the aesthetic considerations frequently eclipsed a more critical awareness of construction and /or production.

The legacy of Modernist critical frameworks

A major problem for this study is the persisting influence of a Modernist critical framework relating to design in Britain. This is especially true of accounts relating to design in the inter-war period when the new role of industrial designer was recognised and endorsed by pro-Modernists. Its legacy has been a particularised focus upon the achievements of innovative designers in rising to the challenge of new outlooks and approaches and bringing about change. Within such accounts, and this pertains especially to writings about Murray, design is rarely conceptualised as a complex joint endeavour affected by economic, social and cultural dimensions. In that respect, Modernist critical and historical frameworks have incorporated key aspects of conventional decorative

arts scholarship in terms of their focus on significant designers and important firms.

Modernism and decorative arts scholarship

This study is made more complex by the fact that decorative arts scholarship in Britain, especially of those 'arts' relating to the manufacture of domestic items, was itself influenced by Modern Movement theories of what constituted 'good' contemporary design. That influence can be seen most clearly in the collecting policy of the Victoria & Albert Museum, [V & A Museum] which was Britain's most important design collection for most of the twentieth century. As early as the 1930s, the V&A started to collect examples of good everyday design including examples in ceramics and glass by Keith Murray. Whilst the collection was not limited to Bauhaus-inspired artefacts, it nonetheless represented the more progressive side of the design spectrum, as approved by design reformers. The historiographical section which follows explains the major role of the V&A in promoting and representing Keith Murray as a significant Modernist designer. That is but one example of how the historical representation of Murray's career and output as a designer has been informed, and as a consequence limited, by an over-arching Modernist framework which has dominated critical discussion of design, industrial design and even aspects of the decorative arts in Britain from the 1930s.

Social and economic factors

Any serious account of a designer's work must be situated in a broader context relating it to production and consumption. That is problematic in terms of progressive design of the inter-war period in Britain because it has been documented largely within the framework of design and design reform issues and achievements. Thus our understanding of how the design conscious sectors of manufacturing industry operated and the relative commercial health of those industries is a partial one.[7] For example, although this study aims to present a

[7] There is growing interests amongst design historians in approaches that interrogate more commercially-driven (and less aesthetically significant) production such as Judy Attfield's '

broader, more detailed and cohesive account of Murray's brief career in design, it does not shed much light on the more traditional output of Stevens & Williams and on the tastes of the market which supported it. That history has yet to be written as part of a macro-study on the demise of traditional glass manufacture in twentieth century Britain. Although this study highlights the partiality of our knowledge about manufacturing and market sectors, and in some ways perpetuates that asymmetrical understanding, it analyses how and why at least two long established and traditional manufacturing firms looked to the potential of new approaches to design as an interim (or even alternative) means of engaging with the prospect of modernisation. In that respect, this design monograph will be a useful resource for broader socio-economic studies.

Accounting for 'Swedish influence'

The inter-disciplinary nature of this study presents some problems in terms of synthesising information and ideas but it also represents its greatest strength. It enables certain received ideas to be tested against specific examples. For example, there is a general acceptance that Swedish design and design ideology was influential in Britain in the inter-war period but little substantiated proof exists of how such 'influence' directly affected the material form and detail of British artefacts and buildings. This study employs research into (a) the cross-fertilisation of ideas between design reform movements in both Britain and Sweden, (b) the material objects that became known outside of Sweden through study trips, international exhibitions, enlightened retailing and through illustrated publications, (c) the designs and ideas of one designer (Murray) which indicate an awareness and appreciation of Swedish designs, (d) negative criticism of Swedish design from both pro-Modern commentators and manufacturers and retailers in Britain. The thesis goes beyond a scant and largely phenomenological account of how such 'foreign influence' can play an

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"Give 'em something dark and heavy": the Role of Design in the Material Culture of popular British Furniture, 1939 – 1965', *Journal of Design History,* vol. 9, no.3, 1996, pp 185 – 202. Although Attfield's study focuses partly on analysis of examples of products, (that is, it is not a socio-economic history of commercial furniture production *per se*) Attfield's analysis could not ignore issues of popular taste as well as more technically and economically driven commercial imperatives.

affective part in the design of another country by putting some factual 'meat' on the bones of received but otherwise insubstantial understanding of that pervasive influence.

Architecture and design

This study makes frequent reference to Murray's training and status as an architect and considers for example, how aspects of his architectural design methods and approach were integrated into his industrial design method. However, although it recognises the significance of Murray's training and professional experience as an architect in both shaping his design philosophy and to the subsequent recognition of Murray's role of designer for industry in the 1930s, there are several factors, not least the specific time-frame of the present study (i.e. approximately 1931 –1948), that mitigates against a fuller evaluation of Murray's architectural career. Reference to Murray's professional biography set out in Appendix I shows that there is little record of any significant architectural work undertaken by him in the 1920s, aside from his employment in the practice of Maxwell Ayrton FRIBA, (Simpson & Ayrton), whose principal architectural project of the 1920s was the design of the Wembley Stadium in association with structural engineer Owen Williams.

Prior to achieving a public reputation of a designer of note in the 1930s, Murray had begun to be recognised for his skills as a topographical artist.[8] His growing success in that field is measured by an independent exhibition of topographical drawings of Spain in 1928 and the inclusion of his work in a book explaining contemporary architectural drawing styles published in 1931.[9] After that date there is no record of Murray pursuing architectural drawing as a distinct aspect of his architectural career. Indeed the trajectory of his architectural career is

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[8] The first record of Murray's architectural drawing skills relates to a 'twelve hour sketch design' undertaken by Murray as a third year student at the Architectural Association School. The sketch titled 'Doorway to a Village Church' was illustrated in a book of sketches chosen from the work of senior students at the school. See Robert Atkinson et al (eds), *A Book of Design by Senior Students of the Architectural Association School,* Ernest Benn Ltd., London, 1924, pp 30 – 31.

[9] See Plate XIII, 'Bridge over the Nene, Wansford. Maxwell Ayrton, FRIBA, Architect. Sir Owen Williams, KBE, Engineer. Drawn by Keith D P Murray, ARIBA' in Cyril Farey and

fragmented or at least episodic, as might be expected for a man who had to negotiate his architectural training and professional practice around two World Wars (in both of which he was enrolled in active service) and a world recession that affected the architectural profession in Britain for most of the 1930s. Thus Murray's major output as a professional architect post-dated his career in design and it is consequently difficult to make connections between the two aspects of his career in the time-frame established for this study. There was one important commission in the 1930s which arose out of his working relationship as a freelance ceramic designer with his employer, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd. That was for the factory and offices for the firm's new plant and headquarters at Barlaston, the initial stage of which was built between 1936 and 1940. The importance of this commission for re-establishing Murray's career as a designer after 1936 cannot be over-stated. His subsequent success in building a thriving architectural practice was a key factor in terminating his design activities thus there is detailed discussion of this commission in this thesis, particularly in Chapter Three. It is significant in that particular context because it illuminates how Murray's first-hand experience of designing for factory production enabled him to design an industrial building along functionalist lines. Thus, although important themes emerge from this study regarding a two-way flow of ideas and influence between Murray's architectural praxis and design praxis (and are articulated within this thesis) a fuller exploration and analysis of the relationship between both aspects of his work takes us beyond the time-frame established for the current study and therefore lies outside of its scope.

Aims and Objectives of this Study

The limitations and problems outlined above justify the singular focus on this important designer. However, this study of Murray's designs mostly from the period 1932 – 1939 goes beyond the conventions of a decorative arts-style monograph and also challenges historiographical accounts that have perpetuated certain ideas about Murray in the context of the Modern Movement. Its

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Tristan Edwards, *Architectural Drawing Perspective and Rendering: A handbook for students and draughtsmen,* Batsford, London, 1931

principal objective is to locate the work of Keith Murray within the broader context of British design for industry and design reform in the 1930s. Thus although it seeks to assess critically the extent to which Murray identified with and engaged with the differing concepts of progressive design that collectively constituted the design reform movement in Britain in the inter-war period it also aims to examine and analyse how Murray's Modernist approach was advanced through dissemination in the commercial field. Contingent to those objectives are four principal aims around which the study is developed:

(i) to set out and critically examine Murray's own design philosophy and methodology in order to interrogate certain inconsistencies between his theory and practice, particularly in relation to rationalism, 'functionalism' and the 'Modern' and between traditional production methods and modern machine production

(ii) to consider how Murray's working relationship with the two principal manufacturers by whom he was employed effectively supported or challenged his ideas about designing for industry

(iii) to identify and account for the various ideas and influences (in terms of both design philosophy and stylistic idiom), which contributed to Keith Murray's Modernist aesthetic for glass, ceramics and metal.

(iv) to examine and analyse the range of discursive contexts, including the commercial in Murray's Modernist approach to designing for industry was interpreted and promulgated.

Historiography

Given Murray's rapid emergence as a significant designer for industry in the 1930s when the importance of designing for industry was a major public and official concern in Britain, it is surprising that his contribution to design has not been evaluated in a book-length design monograph. This does not imply that Murray has been overlooked or "forgotten" by historians and curators. Murray's designs have consistently featured in contemporary and retrospective exhibitions relating to progressive design in the 1930s and have been discussed by commentators and/or historians in related exhibition publications and/or

printed reviews. For example, most books, which evaluate 20th century British design or glass, ceramics or metal in some capacity, include an indexed reference to Murray signifying his contribution to the specific field. Typical in that respect is John Gloag's *Industrial Art Explained* (1934), which cites Murray as one of the few noteworthy practitioners of what he called 'industrial decorative art' of the interwar period.[10] Another aspect typified by Gloag's representation of Murray is his inclusion of illustrated examples of his work.[11]

Suffice it to say that there has not been a decade since the 1930s when some aspect Murray's work has not been written about or illustrated in books, journals and exhibition catalogues. As a consequence, the historiography encompasses a broad range of perspectives including those of design critics and theorists, museum curators, decorative arts scholars, architectural and design historians which have informed the present study.

Scholastic paradigms

Despite its apparent diversity, most of the literature to date about Keith Murray is premised upon writers' efforts to establish Murray as a significant innovator within two distinct canons: British Modernist architecture and design and British decorative arts. Examples of the former include studies such as Fiona MacCarthy, *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, 1972,[12] and the exhibition catalogue, *Thirties: British Art and Design Before the War*, 1979.[13] In the latter, Jennifer Hawkins singled out Murray's designs for Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams as uniquely, amongst British products, appealing to the 'extreme purists of the International Modern camp'.[14] This particular example is more

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[10] See John Gloag, 'The Present State of Industrial Art' in *Industrial Art Explained*, 2nd revised and enlarged edition, George Allen & Unwin, 1946, pp 151 – 2

[11] In this case a decanter and glasses designed by Murray c.1933 and manufactured by Stevens & Williams Ltd, and illustration. Ibid. Plate 9.

[12] Fiona Mac Carthy, *All Things Bright and Beautiful,* George Allen and Unwin, 1972. This book was subsequently revised and published under the new title: *A History of British Design 1830 – 1970*, by George Allen and Unwin, 1979.

[13] Hawkins, J. and Hollis, M. (eds.) *Thirties: British Art and Design Before the War*, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979.

[14] Ibid, pp. 93 -96.

problematic as much of the exhibition was conceived and organised along decorative arts lines, (see below). However, in such texts the overall focus is 'progressive' in the sense of evaluating Murray's contribution to the emergent Modern Movement in British design.

Decorative arts approaches

A more conventional approach, in the sense of incorporating Murray's designs in particular media into a twentieth century British decorative arts paradigm (including the sub-canons: histories of glass, ceramics and metal), is found in historical accounts such as W.B. Honey's *Wedgwood Ware,* 1948. Honey, then keeper of ceramics and glass at the V&A, situated Murray's designs for the firm within a historical framework of innovative design by major artists and designers employed or commissioned by the firm.[15] Other evaluative texts in this category tend to focus on Murray's contribution to either British glass or British ceramic design, depending on the context of the publication, for example, W. A. Thorpe, *English Glass,* (1949), which located Murray's work for Stevens & Williams at the recent end of a long tradition of fine glass making in Britain.

Comparative analysis of the two distinct paradigms delineated above reveals a substantial overlap because both histories of British design and histories of the decorative arts in Britain written between c.1930 – c.1980 are characterised by an over-arching Modernist sensibility. There are, for example, several decorative arts studies that locate Murray's designs for glass within a Modernist-inflected canon. Both Ada Polak's *Modern Glass,* (1962) and Geoffrey Beard's *International Modern Glass,* (1976) focus on: i) the role of the individual artist or designer as originator or interpreter of Modernist aesthetics, ii) a set of aesthetics based primarily on form and iii) studio glass or objects made in art glass factories.

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[15] W.B. Honey, *Wedgwood Ware,* Faber, 1948.

Decorative arts literature about Murray produced in connection with collections, exhibitions and/or auctions

Murray's designs in ceramics and glass are well represented in British museums and public collections; indeed Murray's designs began to be acquired for several such collections in the 1930s whilst he was establishing his design career.[16] The most important and sizeable collection of Keith Murray glass and ceramics is that held by the Department of Ceramics and Glass at the V&A. The existence of such a collection has ensured that photographic illustrations of Keith Murray's designs were available for illustrative purposes. It has also enabled pieces to be loaned for exhibition displays. For example, items from this collection featured in two important exhibitions in the 1970s: *Keith Murray* [17] and the *Thirties* exhibition, (discussed in detail below).[18] It is likely that these two exhibitions, staged at a time when there was growing interest in the inter-war period, stimulated an interest in Murray's designs amongst private collectors. These and other exhibitions, which publicised Murray's contribution to design and any associated literature, are included in this historiographical section to underline the fact that the scholastic endeavour behind them, whether by museum curator or commercial dealer, is not neutral in terms of specific paradigmatic approaches to the subject.

Collector–dealer scholarship

Curators, collectors and dealers have played a major part in forming opinions about Keith Murray and especially in establishing him as a major figure in the decorative arts.[19] The first indication that Murray's designs were becoming

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[16] The V&A Museum, Manchester City Art Galleries and the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths all purchased designs by Keith Murray in the 1930s as part of their policies of collecting examples of contemporary British design.

[17] *Keith Murray,* V & A Museum, London, 1977.

[18] *Thirties: British Art and Design Before the War,* an exhibition organised by the Arts Council of Great Britain in collaboration with the V&A. Hayward Gallery, London, 25 October 1979 - 13 January, 1980

[19] I explored the various strands of interest that has contributed to Murray's reputation as a noteworthy designer in an unpublished conference paper: 'Preciousness in terms of assigning values to "exemplary" twentieth century designs, Case Study: Keith Murray's designs in ceramics and glass', *Precious: Objects and Changing Values,* Sheffield Hallam University in

popular with pottery collectors was an article printed in *Antique and Collectors' Club* in 1982.[20] That same year, the scholarly antique dealer, Richard Dennis, staged an exhibition, *Wedgwood Ceramics 1846 – 1959*. He published a book, researched and written by ceramics historian Maureen Batkin, to coincide with the exhibition.[21] Batkin positioned Murray at the forefront of industrial design as one whose designs for glass and ceramics accorded with European Modernism. She rated him as the most important freelance designer to work for Wedgwood in the 1930s: high praise considering that other 'outside' designers included the sculptors Alan Best and John Skeaping and the artist Eric Ravilious.[22] The book was lavishly illustrated with items from the Dennis collection including a comprehensive sample of Keith Murray shapes in a broad range of bodies and glazes.[23] The Dennis collection of Keith Murray ceramic items was auctioned in 1982 alongside other highly valued Wedgwood pieces, establishing Murray as a designer of note for collectors of twentieth century ceramics.

Modern Movement discourses: chronological phases

The Modernist inflexion affecting both canons is problematic in terms of different conceptualisations of the role of the designer. These are discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Those texts that discuss Murray's designs in the context of a Modernist discourse about designing for industry and the role of the designer can be split into three chronological phases: (1) contemporary to the period in which he worked as a designer,[24] (2) c.1956 to c.1980, (3) c. 1980 to

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collaboration with Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust and the Victoria & Albert Museum, May 24th 2001

[20] Jill Rumsey, "Keith Murray", *Antique and Collectors' Club,* 1982 Vol. 16 pp. 32 – 34.

[21] Maureen Batkin, *Wedgwood Ceramics 1846 – 1959, a New Appraisal,* Richard Dennis, 1982.

[22] A measure of the importance attached to Murray's ceramic designs was the fact that an entire chapter of that book was devoted to his work for Wedgwood. Ibid, 'Chapter XIV Keith Murray', pp. 205 – 212.

[23] Ibid. see plate L, a full page colour photograph which features over 40 Keith Murray pot shapes, four bodies, three glaze types and nine colourways, p. 207.

[24] It is difficult to define the parameters of this phase because he designed no glass and silver

date. The first phase is coincidental with the pervasive influence of the Modern Movement on British design and criticism. The second marks a re-evaluation of that period, especially during the 1970s, in the light of new research and the subsequent problematising of the Modernist critique. A third phase sees the development of a 'post-modern' perspective that challenged the concepts of the inevitability of progress and the virtues of 'functionalism' and machine production. I would situate my own studies, published and otherwise, in this latter category, both chronologically and ideologically as explained below.[25]

1. Contemporary Phase (c1933 – 1954)

This phase is limited to primary accounts that assessed Murray's designs or his role as a practising designer. Of that first phase, the most important source for this study is Nikolaus Pevsner's, *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England* [hereafter *Enquiry*] which situated Murray in the vanguard of British Modernist

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after 1939 but worked as a design consultant for Wedgwood until approximately 1948. Wedgwood continued to make many of Murray's designs well into the 1950s, although the majority was designed before 1939. I would, therefore, consider that the 'contemporary phase' would include accounts of his work in glass and metal (c. 1933 -1940), and accounts of his work in ceramics and other primary accounts including those, for example, which discussed his contribution to designing for industry, as spanning the period c. 1933 – 1955.

[25] In chronological order these are:

Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray: Designer Industrial Designer? A Study of the Problematic of 'Modern' Aesthetics and Traditional Production Processes', Undergraduate Dissertation, Leicester Polytechnic, 1984.
Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray, Designer in Glass, Ceramics and Silver', *Antique and Collecting,* Vol.21. No.11. April 1987, pp. 23 - 27.
Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray, FRIBA., RDI. (1892 - 1981)', in; Roger Dodsworth (ed.), *British Glass Between the Wars,* Exhibition Catalogue, Dudley Leisure Services, Dudley, West Midlands, 1987, pp. 31 - 35.*

Diane Taylor, Keith Murray Modern Glass – The Swedish Connection, *Journal of the Glass Association,* Vol.2, 1987, pp. 55 – 67.*
Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray, Modernist Designer in Glass, Ceramics and Metal', *Studies in the Decorative Arts,* New York, Vol. 1, no. 2, Spring 1994, pp. 67 - 87.*
Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray: Architect and Designer For Industry', *Twentieth Century Architecture: The Journal of the Twentieth Century Society,* Number One, Summer 1994, pp. 45 –54.*

* Denotes that copies of these are included in the appendices to this thesis. See Appendix XIII

design in ceramics and glass.[26] Pevsner investigated light manufacturing industries in England; especially those associated with products for which aesthetic considerations played some part in their appeal to consumers, for example, ceramics, glass, leatherwear, carpets, furniture, fabrics and motor cars. Whereas other books on design frequently focussed on examples that the author considered to constitute excellence, *Enquiry* was a far broader survey and more complex in its aims.[27] It attempted to account for both the commercial and social factors that shaped the design and manufacture of the majority of domestic goods made in England's industrial heartland.[28]

Murray's work was singled out for individual comment in two sections of *Enquiry* relating to the pottery and glass trades, (both Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams falling within the parameters of Pevsner's survey). He had no hesitation in positioning Murray at the forefront of design in ceramics (as well as glass) when he described him as 'one of England's best pottery designers'.[29] Of particular significance for this study was Pevsner's assessment of Murray's involvement at Stevens & Williams, which was in the context of a positive comparison with the Swedish glass firm, Orrefors. Pevsner unhesitatingly recommended Orrefors' methods of design and manufacture as a model for traditional British glass firms to emulate. Such championing of Murray's designs in *Enquiry* endorsed Murray's reputation as a significant Modernist designer as Pevsner had published the highly influential and seminally important historical account, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* only the year before.[30]

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[26] Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England*, Cambridge, 1937.

[27] Pevsner's *Enquiry* was the product of a year of research at the University of Birmingham (1934 - 1935), using empirical methods developed by Sargant Florence, Professor of Commerce, for research into local industries.

[28] For a detailed critical analysis of this important work see Pauline Madge, 'An Enquiry into Pevsner's *Enquiry*', *Journal of Design History*, vol. I, Number 2, 1988, pp. 113 -126.

[29] Pevsner, op.cit p. 84.

[30] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement,* Faber, 1936. This was later revised and reprinted under the title *Pioneers of the Modern Design*, Pelican 1960.

Pevsner emphasised Murray's status both as an architect and one who had a national rather than local outlook by describing him as 'the London architect'. This title distinguished Murray's commendable efforts from the eclectic examples that were the mainstay of more parochial staff designers. It also indicated the progressive attitude to design practice of the two firms who commissioned him.[31] Clearly, for Pevsner, the example of such a collaboration between an architect-designer of national status and two enlightened manufacturers, was one which accorded with his own ideas about the modernisation of industry along more rational (and, in the case of Britain) less traditional and parochial lines. The end of the contemporary phase is marked by a related post-war study by Michael Farr, *Design in British Industry: A Mid-century Survey*, (hereafter *Survey*), published in 1955, in which Murray's pre-war contribution to an emergent British industrial design profession was recognised in retrospect.[32]

2. c.1955 – 1980

Key texts representing a second phase of this historiography relating to Murray when much of the received knowledge about the principles and characteristics of the early Modern Movement was re-evaluated include the Open University *History of Architecture and Design 1890 – 1939* course books and related material[33] and the *Thirties* exhibition catalogue.[34] The former set out a more critical position with regards to the Modernist orthodoxy that had hitherto dominated the study and critique of twentieth century design.

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[31] Pevsner frequently referred to Murray in this oblique manner, but it is clear that he was discussing Murray and his work. See Pevsner, op.cit. *Enquiry,* pp .75, 84 and 89.

[32] Michael Farr, *Design in British Industry: A Mid-century Survey*, Cambridge, 1955. Murray is one of a very small number of pre-war designers mentioned in this survey. Farr briefly discussed his work in the relevant sections on pottery, glass, the Faculty of Designers for Industry, the 1935 exhibition, *British Art in Industry* and the role of the architect-designer.

[33] Open University Course A305, *History of Architecture and Design 1890 -1939*, Milton Keynes, 1975.

[34] Jennifer Hawkins and M Hollis, (eds), *Thirties: British Art & Design Before the War*, (exhibition catalogue), Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979

The course books and accompanying source book also occupy a significant place in the historiography of design in Britain in the period from 1890 –1939. The scholarly course team identified primary sources, critically assessed seminal texts, compiled readers and documentary sources, which have themselves, become essential reading for architectural and design historians.[35] The course was strongly biased towards a Pevsnerian - style Modernist account of architectural and design history but in the units devoted largely to British architecture and design c.1915 - 1939, there was a broader approach including sections on the design of the suburban inter-war home and on moderne design.[36] Nevertheless, the extent to which Modernist orthodoxy was adhered to is apparent in the attention paid in those units to the design reform movement and design theory which emphasised the basic tenets of Modernism and the International Style in both architecture and design.[37] The discussion of Murray's work in the units devoted to British design is analysed in detail in Chapter One of this thesis. In essence, the authors still cited the 'scientific rationalism of the Bauhaus' as the measure for advanced design without questioning that Modernist orthodoxy. They positioned Murray's designs for Wedgwood along with a small vanguard which included Marcel Breuer and Wells Coates, as legatees of the Bauhaus methodology. Nonetheless, as any perusal of the design books of either of the firms featured in this thesis will reveal – Murray's work included the decorative as well as the 'severely rational'.

The role of the *Thirties* exhibition in reviving a general interest in Keith Murray's designs has already been discussed as selected examples of his ceramics, glass and metal designs were exhibited and also illustrated in the

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[35] Aside from the excellent course books which are discussed in this historiography, major publications produced in conjunction with this course includes Tim and Charlotte Benton (eds.), *Form and Function: A Source Book for the History of Architecture and Design 1890 - 1939*, Granada, 1975.

[36] See Geoffrey Newman et al, Part Two: 'Modernism and the Moderne' in Britain, in *British Design (A305 units 19 and 20),* Unit 19, pp 19 –26, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1975.

[37] Ibid. Unit 19, see particularly Part One: 'The Design and Industries Association 1915 – 1929', sections 5, 6, 7; Part Two: 'Modernism and the 'Moderne' in Britain', section 5; Part Three: 'Herbert Read and the International Style', sections 1 – 4.

accompanying catalogue. On a broader level the exhibition contributed to the re-evaluation of British Modernism by historians and curators during the 1970s. A major aim was to reveal the multiplicity of styles that characterised the visual arts, architecture and design produced in Britain throughout the 1930s.[38] An analysis of those sections of the catalogue devoted to architecture and the decorative arts however reveals a bias towards the Modern Movement at the expense of other aspects of British design.[39] The Foreword to the catalogue recognised that there was a certain incompatibility in the approach fostered by its two exhibition committees resulting in an exhibition of two halves, one broadly speaking concerned with the arts and decorative arts and another that explored more socially-oriented thematics.[40] Its importance for this section of the historiography relating to Modernist approaches is that it illustrates a problematic duality affecting visual and material representations of 1930s Britain. A dualism that operated axiomatically, with regard to its treatment of Murray, in its bias towards Modern Movement aesthetics and to critical and interpretative approaches associated with the decorative arts.

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[38] A major flaw of this exhibition, especially with regards to the pervading decorative arts approach, was a high degree of elitism and a neglect of the popular. Indeed the Foreword to the catalogue described these sections as reviewing 'the art and design *achievements* of the decade under headings of style and categories of object' (my emphasis). This implied that the principal criteria for inclusion were either aesthetic excellence or stylistic advance. In reality, that selection may have been determined by pragmatic factors. Not least of these was the range and availability of items in the V&A Museum's collections. Indeed, the ceramic and glass exhibits were drawn from that source, having been acquired by the museum during the preceding fifty years to represent the most 'advanced' examples of twentieth century design. That was certainly the case with Murray's work in ceramics and glass, some examples of which had been purchased by the Museum as early as 1934.

[39] This arose because the exhibition and its catalogue were produced by two distinct institutions, The Arts Council of Great Britain and the V&A Museum, (the latter being responsible for the generic displays of decorative arts). The main Exhibition Committee was composed of members of the Arts Council's staff plus academics and writers, three members of the V&A Committee and a representative from the Science Museum. The V&A Committee comprised of a team of its own decorative arts keepers and curators.

[40] Joanna Drew, Director of Art, Arts Council and Roy Strong, Director of the V&A, explained the paradigmatic schism resulting in a first part containing 11 generic displays (Decorative Arts, Graphics, Painting and Sculpture, Architecture and Interiors) and a second devoted to specific themes broadly linked under the general theme of Communications and Commerce, but also including some depiction of the social history of that decade in documentary and news photography. General themes in the decorative arts sections included: Arts and Crafts Continuum and Georgian Revival (Section 2); fine handicrafts, especially silverwork, metalwork, jewellery and bookbinding (Section 3); furniture, ceramics and textiles "in the 'International' and 'Jazz Modern' (Art Deco) styles (Section 4); furniture, textiles, ceramics, glass, sculpture and publications representing the 'International Modern' [sic] style in Britain (Section 10).

In particular, it represented the work by noted designers of that period, including Murray, as worthy of study and / or collection.[41] The exhibition promoted a view of Murray as a major contributor to the Modern Movement in British Design alongside more famous architects, artists and sculptors whose reputations as Modernists were well established, including designers Marcel Breuer and Wells Coates, the sculptor, Barbara Hepworth and painter, Ben Nicholson. In other sections, which represented a broad spectrum of styles, Murray's work represented the more Modernist-inspired end of that spectrum.

In the exhibition catalogue, Jennifer Hawkins situated Murray's designs, 'squarely in the International Modern camp'.[42] As Keeper of Glass & Ceramics at the V&A and organiser of the 1977 *Keith Murray* exhibition her knowledge of the broader range of Murray's designs, (a major theme of this present study), is apparent in her essay which also commented upon Murray's 'understanding and appreciation of the fashionable revivalism'. This according to Hawkins implied those designs inspired by Georgian or Regency styles but given a contemporary character that distinguished them from reproductions.[43] Hawkins disregarded this latter category as a minor aspect of Murray's work. It is likely that, in common with others, she either miscalculated the large proportion of designs in all three media, especially glass, which were not, as she claimed 'squarely in the International Modern Camp' or she saw them simply as minor aberrations. Thus the *Thirties* exhibition, staged only two years before Murray's death, perpetuated a view of Murray as one of a very small coterie of British designers who embraced the aesthetics of Bauhaus-inspired Modernism.

The Modernist bias undermined the exhibition's aim to explore the plurality of design in the 1930s. There is evidence that, whilst acknowledging a broader and more populist range of styles of that period, especially Art Deco, there was nonetheless an implied hierarchy which valued Modernist designers above all

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[41] The exhibition catalogue included a biographical section which set out details of featured artists, designers, architects and photographers and also a brief section which reviewed design associations and groups; significantly, all of those organisations were involved in design reform and / or the promotion of Modernism in the 1930s. Op.cit., *Thirties*, catalogue, pp. 283 -304.

[42] Ibid. See Jennifer Hawkins, 'Industrial Ceramics and Glass', p. 94.

[43] Ibid, p. 93.

others. For example, Murray's contemporary, the pottery designer Clarice Cliff, was barely mentioned in the catalogue and her work rated only one exhibit, despite the fact that there was a growing revival of interest in her Art Deco designs for ceramics by that time. By contrast the modernistic designs of Susie Cooper were extensively featured in displays and critically acclaimed in the catalogue. In her discussion of Art Deco ceramics, Hawkins singled out Susie Cooper as one of the very few British designers and manufacturers 'who grasped the essential spirit and produced pieces of distinction and with obvious understanding'.[44] Without diminishing the importance of Cooper's work, there is a suggestion that the keepers and curators of twentieth century collections of design at the V&A were more comfortable with her version of Art Deco ceramic design than that of Cliff.[45] This is probably because, unlike Cliff, she made the transition from Art Deco to a more rationally-inspired Modernist aesthetic in the 1930s and was formally recognised as an important Modernist designer, hence the V&A's substantial collection of her work.[46]

3. Post-modern perspectives (c. 1980 to date)

(i) Re-evaluating the Modern Movement in design between the wars

Exhibitions (and their associated publications) have continued to play an important role in perpetuating the idea of Murray as a significant and original designer in the context of the Modern Movement in British design. The most recent in this vein was the Design Museum's *Modern Britain 1929 –1939* exhibition staged in 1999, which featured examples of glass and ceramics by Murray as well as an architectural rendering c. 1936, of an unrealised design by him showing the proposed new Wedgwood factory and offices in the

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[44] Ibid, p. 95.

[45] Cheryl Buckley examines the anomalous treatment of these two female designers in; *Potters and Paintresses: Women Designers in the Pottery Industry, 1870 - 1955,* The Women's Press, London, 1990, pp. 116 -133

[46] Susie Cooper achieved recognition as a designer for industry; for example, in 1940, she became one of the first women to be awarded the distinction of Royal Designer for Industry, (RDI).

International Style.[47] The exhibition organisers recognised the *Thirties* exhibition as an important antecedent and acknowledged the effectiveness of that exhibition in presenting a more inclusive picture of the stylistic pluralism of that decade.[48] Its focus on the Modern Movement in Britain, which might in respect of the *Thirties* exhibition have seemed retrogressive, was justified on the grounds of its aim to explore further certain pluralities within it.

Most pertinently for this study, the exhibition aimed to examine both 'the conscious emulation of things European' and also 'a peculiarly British response to the Modern'.[49] It might have been useful, given the hitherto dichotomous opinions surrounding Murray's contribution (or otherwise) to the Modern Movement, to have considered how differing aspects of Murray's design oeuvre conformed to both of those categories. Instead, the discussion of his designs (but not his architecture) in the exhibition publication was confined to one specific context, an analysis of Manchester City Art Gallery's *Industrial Art Collection.*[50] Its historiographical significance for this study is that its analysis of Murray is not distorted by the writers' attempt to claim him as a significant promulgator of European Modernism.

The authors, Jane Fraser and Liz Paul, acknowledged Murray's significant contribution to the modernising process affecting design within the traditional sectors of British manufacturing. However, they argued that Murray's interpretation reflected an inherently British conceptualisation of design in the same vein as Robert Adam and the first Josiah Wedgwood. The latter they described as 'a responsible genius with collective ideals.'[51] His genius, and by extension Adam's and Murray's, lay in innovating approaches suited to modern (in the authors' terms, post-feudal) conditions of production and consumption.

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[47] The factory was built 1938 -1940, as per the original drawing. The proposed administration block in the International Style was rejected in favour of a red-brick version.

[48] See Alan Powers, 'The Search for a New Reality', in James Peto and Donna Loveday, (eds.), *Modern Britain, 1929 – 1939*, Exhibition publication, Design Museum, London, 1999, p.18.

[49]. See Paul Thompson's Introductory essay. Ibid, p.17

[50] See Jane Fraser and Liz Paul, 'A Living Tradition: Modernism and The Decorative Arts'. Ibid, pp. 52 – 68. (Details of the collection are discussed later in the section on sources).

[51] Ibid. p 54.

In the context of that thesis, the contribution of those three to a modern British design sensibility lay in synthesising traditional elements in the contemporary design process.

Fraser and Paul theorised that the individual approaches of all three shared a common respect for tradition, which included various factors such as production methods, materials, forms and styles. In due time, the 'new' was perceived as 'traditional' and subject to the evolutionary process of synthesis and incorporation into newer modern versions. They suggested that Murray '*...purely in design terms* perhaps comes closest to the ideal of a responsible genius', (my emphasis).[52] Murray's own writings on design indicate that he believed that the designer's responsibility went beyond problems relating to aesthetics. Indeed he described the complex and sometimes-conflicting interests of the firm, its employees and the needs of a modern mass market, which he believed the modern industrial designer, was required to address.[53] Murray saw the designer's role as in reconciling those interests and needs to the best of his ability as explained in Chapter Four.

Fraser and Paul implied that Murray's 'genius' lay in his origination of a contemporary aesthetic for inexpensive domestic earthenware ceramics which incorporated elements such as simplicity, well-proportioned shapes, variety of forms and glazes, finely-articulated turned decoration, and excellence of manufacture. Those characteristics precisely matched the achievements of the first Josiah Wedgwood, in bringing well designed high quality goods to a wider, less exclusive market. Indeed they argue that Murray's designs for Wedgwood personified its slogan of the 1930s, 'A Living Tradition', which made explicit the firm's long-standing tradition of innovation. Research for this study has shown that Murray had a profound respect for tradition as well as a longstanding commitment to the ideals of the Modern Movement in architecture and design (borne out in his long architectural career where he never deviated from Modern Movement principles).

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[52] Ibid. p.55.

[53] Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer', *Transactions of the Society of Glass Technology*, Vol. 19, 1935, pp. 10 –17.

Fraser and Paul's discussion of Murray was in the context of their analysis of one man, Lawrence Haward's collecting policy and his predilection for a distinctly British version of Modernism in the decorative arts. Indeed, on the basis of an analysis of the few examples of design by Murray in Manchester's *Industrial Art Collection*, they claimed that '...Murray's style can be seen developing from an architectural Modernism with its roots in Swedish design into a pared-down eighteenth century classicism....' and influenced by the Georgian Revival affecting architecture and design of the 1930s.[54] Whilst analytical case studies of Murray's designs in Chapter Five prove that all of those aesthetic variations co-existed within his oeuvre during the 1930s, there is no evidence of such a linear stylistic development.

Twenty years previously, Hawkins had over-emphasised the importance of Murray's designs in the International Style at the expense of a more accurate acknowledgement that the role of tradition played in Keith Murray's oeuvre. Fraser and Paul seem to have reversed that appraisal and in their turn over-emphasised the role of traditional in Murray's design methodology. In that respect, they failed to make connections with other artefacts in the exhibition associated with Keith Murray, especially the aforementioned drawing for the Wedgwood factory (see Fig. 3: 4). That demonstrated that as late as 1936, Murray was designing in the International Style, hardly consistent with someone whose design work was supposedly reverting to historicist revivalism. *Modern Britain, 1919 – 1839* effectively explored the notion propounded by British design historians of a specifically British interpretation of Modernism in design in the inter-war period. With regard to the assessment of Murray's design in the exhibition catalogue, its emphasis on reworking of the traditional is a partial analysis. It overlooks those aspects of his oeuvre that were in the spirit of European Modernism and in particular, the large number of his designs inspired by contemporary Swedish examples.

(ii) Radical challenges to Modernist critical frameworks

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[54] Fraser and Paul, op. cit. *Modern Britain,* p.55

Other late twentieth century studies by design historians have identified different perspectives which expose specific limitations and prejudices in the Modernist critical framework. With regards to challenging the understanding of Murray's design career, two examples of critical writings about Murray have assessed his status as a designer from both a feminist and a postcolonial position.

Cheryl Buckley's study, *Potters and Paintresses*: *Women Designers in the Pottery Industry 1870 - 1955* explored the subordination of women workers in the pottery industry with regards to designing and decorating activities and roles. Buckley's critical analysis exposed the hierarchical and gendered divisions within the pottery industry that split design into form making (a male role) and decoration - for the most part hand-painting, (principally a female role). Part of Buckley's study explored the impact of Modern Movement ideals on the pottery industry in the 1930s especially at enlightened firms such as Wedgwood that engaged with progressive approaches to design. Buckley used the example of Murray's success as an independent designer for Wedgwood to demonstrate how women designers employed by Wedgwood at that time were doubly disadvantaged by both socially instituted patriarchal attitudes to women in the industry and by restrictive Modernist aesthetics which valued form above decoration. She argued that where male designers like Murray had the privileged position of designing forms (or shapes as they were called in the industry) and were also called upon to design pattern, there were few opportunities for the women employed as designers to create anything other than patterns. That inequality was compounded in the 1930s by the Modernist preference for undecorated forms. Thus Buckley argued that the status of publicly acclaimed male designers like the Modernist, Keith Murray should be re-evaluated in the light of the consequential loss of status and numerical decline of traditional female role of designer-decorator in the pottery industry.[55]

Thoroughly Modern Murray, reviewed Murray's significance as an expatriate colonial designer whose work, especially in ceramics, had been well received in

[55] Buckley, 'What the Ladies Think! Designers for Industry', op.cit. pp. 96 – 133.

his native New Zealand.[56] The exhibition, curated by New Zealand design historian, Linda Tyler, was supported by a published catalogue; *Keith Murray in Context*; that context being a colonial perspective.[57] In her biographical introduction, Tyler emphasised Murray's connections with New Zealand and explained how Murray's professional achievements in Britain were relayed to a New Zealand audience through British journals and even a lecture series give by Gordon Russell in his capacity of Director of the British Council of Industrial Design.[58]

A second essay by Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins argued that Murray's designs for Wedgwood played a significant part in the establishment of a Modernist aesthetic in the embryonic New Zealand pottery industry in the early 1940s.[59] Lloyd-Jenkins discussed the asymmetrical trade relationship between Britain and her colonies and especially the high regard in which prestigious British firms were held by New Zealanders, (and presumably, by extension, other British-settled outposts of Empire such as Australia), even in the post-war period. This essay makes possible a more accurate understanding of the diverse nature of Wedgwood's export markets, c. 1940 –1960. It shows that in New Zealand at least, there was an appreciation of Wedgwood's modern lines, whereas, in the USA, the firm's principal export market, customers preferred the firm's more traditional designs.

A third essay in the exhibition catalogue by Michael Findlay explored a symbiotic relationship with regards to trade and talent. He argued that if New

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[56] *Thoroughly Modern Murray,* Design exhibition at Hawke's Bay Museum, Napier, New Zealand, 30th. November 1996 - 2nd. March 1997.

[57] Dr. Robin Craw (ed.), *Keith Murray in Context*, UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand / Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust, Napier, New Zealand, 1996.

[58] Ibid, see Linda Tyler, 'Keith Murray (1892 – 1981): a Brief Biography', pp 1- 17

[59] Ibid., see Lloyd-Jenkins, D., 'From Paris to Vortex: Keith Murray and New Zealand Ceramics', pp 18 -30. Lloyd-Jenkins essay demonstrates how this early influence was reinforced in the 1948, when former Wedgwood potter, Ernest Shufflebottom emigrated to New Zealand and was employed to make and design wares for the recently established Crown Lynn Pottery in Auckland. Shufflebottom had been part of the highly-skilled team of throwers and turners who made the Keith Murray designs for Wedgwood. In New Zealand he continued, throughout the 1950s, to make variations on Murray's undecorated geometric forms, even to the extent of using a matt white glaze, comparable to Wedgwood's famous *Moonstone* matt white glaze.

Zealand provided Britain with a market for her goods, then New Zealand, in common with other countries with Imperial ties to Britain, by return, provided Britain with a stream of young talented architects and designers who saw Britain as the natural destination for those with international ambitions.[60] Findlay sets out the various roles that colonial-born architects, including many from the Antipodes, played in the development of British Modernism in the inter-war period but challenges the received explanation that such a cohort was fundamentally predisposed to new ideas because its constituents came from 'new' countries.

Findlay demonstrates how some of those expatriate links were kept up in Britain in the formation of architectural partnerships associated with Modernist architecture, such as *Connell, Ward and Lucas*, in the 1930s, (both Amyas Connell and Basil Ward being New Zealanders) and *Ramsey, Murray, White and Ward*, in the post-war period, out of which, the active partners, Keith Murray and Basil Ward, were both New Zealanders.[61] Findlay also emphasises the role that expatriate (colonial-born) architects played in the promulgation of Modernist architecture throughout the British Empire, both as designers and educators. This perspective provides another context for considering Murray and Ward's involvement in major overseas projects; most notably British Airways terminals in Hong Kong and Brunei.

The published catalogue is an important secondary source and makes possible a clearer understanding of the continuing importance of imperial bonds both to provide Britain with a loyal market for exports of British manufactured goods and to provide Britain with a stream of talented designers and architects. It also invites a revision of histories of British Modernism, which have hitherto neglected or ignored a colonial perspective, including those concerning Keith Murray.[62]

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[60] Michael Findlay. 'Was Keith Murray A Martian? Expatriate New Zealanders in British Modernism', in *Keith Murray in Context,* Op Cit. pp 31 – 39

[61] Ward retired from this partnership in 1965, Murray in 1971: the firm, *Murray, Ward and Partners,* is still in business.

[62] Whilst the catalogue offered little evidence of any firm links between Murray and individuals or institutions in New Zealand itself, after 1915, the exhibition organisers did not attempt to 'reclaim' Murray as a New Zealand designer.

(iii) Self-authored writings about Keith Murray

My own writings about Murray have both formed the basis of and emerged out of this present dissertation. An undergraduate dissertation produced case studies of Murray's work in glass, ceramics and silver with particular reference to style and manufacturing methods.[63] It established that, where there was a machine aesthetic in many of Murray's designs, it was achieved, not as the result of modern machine processes, but more often, by hand-intensive processes which were difficult to mass produce. Case studies of Murray's glass designs also revealed a stylistic diversity, especially with reference to applied decoration, hitherto ignored. Two published articles developed from this study of all three media[64] and a further article examined, in detail, Murray's role as architect and designer for Wedgwood.[65]

The broad stylistic and decorative range encompassed in Murray's Modern aesthetic for glass, was set out and analysed in catalogue accompanying the exhibition; *British Glass Between the Wars,* 1986.[66] It concluded that the largest single aesthetic category within Murray's glass designs was that which showed the influence of contemporary Swedish glass. A detailed analysis of that hitherto understated influence on Murray's work, especially his glass, was the subject of a published article which explored, with close attention to individual examples, the various ways that Swedish design in general and Swedish glass in particular, had influenced Murray's own designs for glass.[67]

To summarise my contribution to a historiography of Keith Murray to date, I would emphasise: (1) a recognition of the broad range of stylistic and decorative designs which has been overlooked in previous accounts of Murray's work; (2)

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[63] Diane Taylor, op.cit. *Keith Murray: Designer Industrial Designer? A Study of the Problematic of 'Modern' Aesthetics and Traditional Production Processes.*

[64] Diane Taylor, op.cit *Antique and Collecting.*
and:
Diane Taylor, op.cit. *Studies in the Decorative Arts.*

[65] Diane Taylor,.op. cit. *Twentieth Century Architecture.*

[66] Diane Taylor, op.cit. *British Glass Between the Wars..*

[67] Diane Taylor, op. cit. *Journal of the Glass Association.*

detailed exploration and discussion of the production methods employed in the manufacture of his designs; (3) a fuller exploration of the design philosophy and aesthetic preferences of Keith Murray which I consider to be major constituents of Murray's version of the Modern; (4) a critical analysis of previous accounts of Murray's work as a designer which are themselves entrenched in the orthodoxy of Modernist design.

Sources

Principal Firm's archives

When I first began to research Keith Murray's designs for an undergraduate dissertation in 1983 the two firms for whom Murray made most designs, Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood, still retained a broad range of archive material. It was possible to visit the factories and view design books and collections of items produced by those firms as well as those of several rival British glass firms. Over recent years, however, many of the business archives have been diminished dispersed or are no longer accessible for scholastic research. The reasons for this reflect the changing fortunes of individual British firms who must negotiate the major challenges impacting upon manufacturing as the economic base of the country shifts from an industrial to a post-industrial model. The outcomes of those changes are not straightforward, as a comparison of the fortunes of Wedgwood and Stevens & William's will show. So what follows, in terms of discussing the primary source material for this study is a series of 'snapshots' of material available at specific locations which may well have changed in the interim. A more detailed account of archive contents used in this study, including up-to-date information pertaining to the whereabouts of key source material is given in an appendix so that fellow researchers are made aware of the existence of certain documents and that they will be able to locate those items in the future. (See Appendix II).

Stevens & Williams Ltd.

Up until the sale of this family-owned glassworks, in 1998,[68] the firm's museum and archive included a range of different documentation and objects pertaining to the time that Murray designed for the firm.[69] The most important archival document for this study is the *Keith Murray Description Book, (KMD Book),* a hand drawn day-book which contains small profile drawings of every design by Murray made to prototype stage, each numbered and annotated with production details.[70] This important source, (effectively a *catalogue raisonée* of Murray's designs for glass), and its usefulness for this study is explained in greater detail in Chapter Two.[71] The archive also contained a folder of sketches and full-scale working drawings for designs (some dated) and signed by or attributable to Murray, which were useful to establish the dates of design entries in the *KMD Book* and to examine Murray's method of making large-scale and accurate drafts. Promotional material in the archive made it possible to interrogate popular discourse relating to 'designer ranges' and certain propositions that underlay the visual tableaux of the idealised home in the emergent consumer culture of the inter-war years.

The selling of the museum's glass collection in 1998 was followed by frenzied activity to collate as much of the firm's records as possible in order to place them in the safe keeping of the Broadfield House Glass Museum. That was undertaken by Broadfield House curator, Roger Dodsworth working with

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[68] It ceased to be a family firm in 1998, when it was sold in distressed circumstances to Epsom Activities. Prior to the sale its collection of historic glass reflecting glass making at the Brierley Hill site since the19th century was auctioned off. Design books and other archive material were dispersed, although there was an urgent effort to ensure the survival of historical material mounted by members of the firm in advance of the takeover.

[69] The firm's museum, the Honeyborn House Museum, was housed in part of the original 18th century works at Brierley Hill. Its principal exhibits were two important glass collections (now dispersed): the Williams-Thomas Collection of early English 'Glass of Lead' (174 items) and the Stevens & Williams Collection of Crystal Glass of their own Manufacture (436 items). These were itemised and described in a printed catalogue: *Stevens and Williams Honeybourne House Museum,* published by Royal Brierley Crystal (undated).

[70] There are over 1000 different designs, some of which are for drinking services which comprise of jugs and decanters with matching drinking glasses of various shapes and sizes and bathroom sets which comprise of lidded jars and bowls of different sizes.

[71] The firm's pattern books, including the unique *KMD Book* are the subject of a property dispute with the new owners, so their future is uncertain.

former managing Director, David Williams-Thomas and Sam Thompson. The material was literally bundled into a van and is currently in storage awaiting appraisal and cataloguing at the museum. By contrast, the bigger and more corporate Wedgwood firm has survived but is now part of Waterford Wedgwood plc indicating its recent alignment with glass manufacturing firms.[72] There have been no significant changes to the Wedgwood historical archive (although that is not necessarily the case for other historical collections owned by smaller firms in the Waterford Wedgwood group as indicated in Appendix II)

Josiah Wedgwood & Sons, Ltd.

The important archives, maintained and curated by the Wedgwood Trust located at the Wedgwood Museum at the company's Barlaston headquarters contain a broad range of material which reflects the distinguished history of the Wedgwood firm over more than two centuries. The archive contains much material relating directly to Murray's relationship with Wedgwood as both designer consultant and architect. Also of interest for this study are papers and design books dating from c.1916 - c. 1950, which indicate the progressive outlook of the firm in terms of design and production.[73] All of the designs which Murray made for Wedgwood can be found in the volumes of shape books (c. 1932 - c. 1960) which contain numbered outline drawings of all new designs and amendments to existing ones. These factory books indicate which designs were in production over the two or three years that each volume was current.

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[72] Behind the two historic brand names (Waterford and Wedgwood) are other pottery and glass firms taken over by the two parent companies including Kings Lynn and Wedgwood Glass since its foundation in 1986. Waterford Wedgwood plc also owns Stuart Crystal, which it bought in 1995 and the German porcelain company, Rosenthal.

[73] This is reflected in the inclusion of work in the factory books by well-known artists and sculptors who designed for the firm including John Skeaping, Nils Olsen, Eric Ravilious and Arnold Machin. One example in *Shape Book no 5* is a plate and dish printed with the logo of the Isobar (des. No 4364). The Isobar was the bar and grill in the famous Lawn Road Flats development designed by the Modernist architect, Wells Coates and commissioned by the Modernist patron and design reformer, Jack Pritchard.

From these, it was possible to establish the dates of origination of Murray's designs and the length of time they remained in production.[74]

The post-war version of the shape book *Catalogue for Bodies, Glazes and Shapes Current for 1940 – 1950,* had a section exclusively devoted to Murray's designs in specific bodies: earthenware, two-tone earthenware and basalt bodies. Published by the firm and illustrated with high quality photographic representations of selected pieces, they catalogue Murray's designs in the various ceramic bodies as coherent ranges. These particular shape catalogues were presumably produced for trade purposes as well as for factory reference.[75] They allow historians to trace the extent to which Murray's pre-war designs continued in production after World War Two.

Factory pattern books for earthenware and china from the inter-war period show when the few decorative patterns for tableware which Murray designed went into production.[76] This archive holds a substantial amount of documentation pertaining to the planning, equipping and designing of the new Wedgwood site at Barlaston for which Murray designed the factory and office block in 1936. Two rendered drawings of the proposed Administration building, one in the International Style, revealed Murray's competence as a Modernist architect. [77]

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[74] There are two volumes of shape books that reference Murray's new designs. 'Shape book no. 4' has designs by Murray made (i.e. prepared for production) before the end of January 1935. 'Shape Book no. 5' continues with designs made from Feb.1st 1935 to the end of 1939. It was superseded by the printed *Catalogue for Bodies, Glazes and Shapes Current for 1940 - 1950,* J. Wedgwood and Sons, 1947. Note that some of the earlier shapes by Murray appear later under new numbers when they were produced in different bodies. That was especially the case c. 1936 – 8 when Works Manager, Norman Wilson introduced two-toned glazed ware.

[75] One version has the written text in Spanish, indicating that these printed catalogues were used for promotional purposes in the firm's overseas offices.

[76] The pattern book current at the factory in the 1930s was titled the *I.S. Handcraft Book* which detailed and recorded hand-painted patterns. It contains only two designs by Murray ('Lotus'and 'Pimpernel', although the latter was a printed pattern but with hand painted borders).

[77] The International Style version was not built. See Chapter Three for a more detailed explanation.

(ii) Other Business Archives

Glass making firms

Material relating to glass designs by Murray's contemporaries for other British firms is contained in the company records of Midlands firms; Thomas Webb, Stuart Crystal and Walsh Walsh Ltd., and the London firm, James Powell (Whitefriars Glass) Ltd. which was valuable for contextual and comparative analysis pertaining to progressive approaches to design in the traditional hand-made glass sector of the British glass industry.[78] Primary research into those British glass manufacturers' pattern books demonstrated that production could encompass both traditional and 'modern' design in the inter-war years. It provided historical support for the emergence of 'designer' lines of 'modern' glass in several glass firms and made it possible to gauge the extent to which Murray's success at Stevens & Williams was an influential factor. In the context of evaluating progressive approaches to design the portfolio of correspondence, sketches and designs, dating from 1933, arising out of the so-called 'Foley Experiment' were of special interest at Stuart Crystal's headquarters. The 'experiment' referred to a collaborative project involving leading British artists and the glass manufacturers, Stuart Crystal and the potters, Brain & Co., organised on behalf of the London department store, Harrods.[79] Stuart Crystal also kept its pattern books and records from the 1930s. These featured the work of its Art Director, Ludwig Kny, a British designer craftsman, who developed a modernistic style of decoration from the late 1920s onwards. That material was useful to evaluate the extent to which one of Steven & Williams nearest rivals was committed to modernising its designs.[80]

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[78] Whitefriars glass relocated to Wealdstone, Middlesex in 1924. The firm closed down in 1970.

[79] For a short contextualised account of the glass side of the experiment see Stuart's archivist, Christine Golledge's, 'Stuart and Sons Ltd (1918 – 1939)', in (ed Roger Dodsworth) *British Glass Between the Wars*, (exhibition catalogue), Broadfield House Glass Museum, 1987, pp 28 - 31. Note that the catalogue has an illustrated section devoted to 'The Harrod's Exhibition 1934', which shows many of the glass items made by Stuart for the 1934 exhibition (most of which were still in the firm's own collection). See 'The Harrod's Exhibition 1934', pp 93 -96.

[80] When I visited the firm in the 1980s these (and the Foley Experiment documentation) were kept in the design studio in the care of its Art Director. The Stuart archive relating to the 1934 Harrod's Exhibition is now kept at the Wedgwood Museum in Barlaston. The main Stuart pattern books are there also, but Broadfield House Glass Museum also hold quite a lot of Stuart

The design books and records of the London glassmaking firm, James Powell (Whitefriars Glass) Ltd were consulted because it was the only firm (other than Stevens & Williams) whose designs were singled out by Nikolaus Pevsner as being comparable to Modern Swedish glass. Murray's own account indicated that that the firm played a small part in helping him to gain employment in glass design in 1932 when they were shown sketches by him for 'modern' glass. After studying the examples of the firm's hand-made glass from the inter-war period it was easier to understand why director and designer Marriot Powell advised Murray that his designs were more suited to larger-scale production than to the handicraft methods typical of Whitefriars' Arts & Crafts approach to Modern glass design.

Retailers

It was important to consult promotional material, especially illustrated catalogues or brochures produced by the firms to promote exhibitions associated with Murray's work as a designer.[81] This material has not been readily available as retailers have gone out of business or not kept records. Fortunately Gordon Russell Ltd., Heal & Son Ltd. and the Medici Society Ltd. made available primary material which has not been cited in any previous study. The Medici Society archives contain documents including an original catalogue relating to an exhibition of Murray's designs in glass, ceramics and silver, held at the Society's prestigious Grafton Street Gallery, Bond Street, London in 1935.[82] Details from that exhibition, including the transcript of the speech given at the opening ceremony by Sir William Llewellyn, President of the Royal Academy of Arts provided concrete evidence of how Murray strategically promoted

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archive material. I am grateful to Roger Dodsworth, Keeper of Glass at Broadfield House for this information.

[81] Murray's designs were sold in leading department stores and design-oriented showrooms and several, including the John Lewis Partnership, hosted contemporary exhibitions of Murray's work in collaboration with either Stevens & Williams or Wedgwood. I refer to and discuss below the use for this study of catalogues associated with promotions of Murray's designs at Barrow's Stores, Birmingham (glass) and Grafton Street Galleries, London (ceramics).

[82] The Medici Society Ltd. sells fine-art inspired prints and printed ephemera and art materials through its showrooms in London and Liverpool. The Society's Grafton Street Gallery hosted exhibitions of paintings and objects reflecting its long-standing allegiance to Arts & Crafts artwork.

himself as a significant designer for industry. Promotional material in the archive showed that the Medici Society not only sold Keith Murray ceramics and glass in its galleries in London and Liverpool but also promoted it on a much wider basis via its mail-order retailing service.[83] Through such material it was possible to substantiate better the connections between individuals, institutions and firms associated with design reform in Britain, especially the DIA (of which Heal & Son Ltd., the Medici Society and Gordon Russell Ltd. were members).

(iii) Institutional collections and archives

V &A Museum

The collections and archives of the various departments of the V&A include material pertinent to this study which, in both quantity and range is more comprehensive than any other single institution. Of particular importance are the artefacts and documents held by the Department of Ceramics and Glass; the range of publications including books, exhibition catalogues and exhibition brochures held by the National Art Library and the almost comprehensive range of photographs and negatives of the V&A's holdings of Keith Murray glass and ceramics in the Picture Library. Further pictorial items for study were available in the collections of the V&A's Archive of Art and Design.

Besides the V&A Museum, the following institutions hold important collections of objects designed by Keith Murray: Broadfield House Glass Museum, West Midlands; City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent; The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London; the British Museum, London and Manchester City Art Galleries.[84] Research into those collections showed that several British museums including the V&A acquired artefacts designed by Murray in the

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[83] For example an undated brochure in the archive; *A List of EASTER CARDS & PRESENTS*, [sic], which shows two items of undecorated tinted glass designed by Keith Murray.

[84] Several regional and municipal museums also have small collections of glass and/or ceramics designed by Murray, including Leicestershire Museums and Art Galleries and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

1930s when they were first produced.[85] By studying the breadth and origins of those collections it was possible to interrogate the extent to which some institutions supported design reform objectives by acquiring outstanding examples of contemporary (and frequently industrially-produced) artefacts. Through it, evidence emerged of a growing consciousness of and commitment to the promotion of industrial design (in addition to the contemporary decorative arts).[86] Analysis showed that Murray's designs were frequently represented as exemplary and served a didactic purpose in promoting the virtues of Modernist design to specific audiences.[87]

Broadfield House Glass Museum, Kingswinford, West Midlands, located in the 'Black Country' a major centre for the manufacture of British lead crystal glass, is of national importance for the study of British glass.[88] It has a substantial and growing archive of documents pertaining to Stevens & Williams, many of which refer directly to Keith Murray's work for the firm. The Museum's expert curatorial staff were consulted in order to confirm details relating to local firms' histories and to locate archive materials in support of this study. The Museum has a growing number of glass items designed by Murray in its various

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[85] The British Museum and regional and municipal museum including Manchester, Birmingham and Leicester acquired designs by Keith Murray in the 1930s.

[86] The scope and nature of such didactically-oriented collecting policies was demonstrated at an exhibition of artefacts from the Industrial Art Collection belonging to Manchester City Art Galleries. The exhibition was curated by Lesley Jackson: *Designing For Living: Art & Industry in the 1930s,* Manchester City Art Galleries, 14 March – 31 May 1998.

[87] An interesting example is a collection of artefacts acquired by the Education Department of Leicestershire Museums and Art Galleries. The purpose of this collection, which embraced both the arts and the natural sciences, was to enable Leicestershire schools and colleges to borrow items for display and teaching purposes. Designs by Keith Murray were purchased during the 1930s alongside handicraft glass and ceramics including some pieces of glass made by Whitefriars and they were used to demonstrate the principles of good design to generations of schoolchildren. As evidence to their frequent handling, many of the less durable pieces are now lost or badly damaged, including all of the Keith Murray designs. The provenance of the pieces is recorded; much of the ceramics and glass being purchased from the showrooms of the local firm, Dryad and Co. of Leicester which, through its founder, Harry Peach's connections, had impeccable links with the DIA (Design and Industries Association).

[88] Broadfield House was established in the 1980s and curated by two of Britain's foremost experts in historical glass, Roger Dodsworth and Charles Haydemach (retired 2003). The museum's displays, exhibitions, collections and archives are of national significance.

collections as well as examples of British and Swedish glass of the inter-war period which were studied to support formal and contextual analysis.[89]

The most important museum and archive collection for a broad study of progressive design in British silver and silver plate is that of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London. The collection contains a cup and cover made by Mappin and Webb Ltd. (hallmark date 1934), the only piece of metalwork in a public collection which is unequivocally attributed to Keith Murray. Documents in the Goldsmiths' archives reveal the extent to which the Company was actively engaged in promoting progressive approaches to the design of silverware.[90] The file 'Keith Murray c. 1930 -1950' contains photographs representing his designs in metal.[91] The archive and collection was consulted in order to substantiate the meagre historical account of Murray's work as a designer of metal. That understanding made it possible to appraise the limited role Murray's work for Mappin & Webb played in developing his industrial design methodology.

The archives of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), London were examined because it was constructive in promoting design for industry in the 1930s. The RSA Library's archive includes the proceedings of the committee and sub-committees involved in the *Industrial Art in Industry* exhibition prestigious Burlington House, London in 1935 as well as the catalogue and published reviews. In 1938, the Faculty of RDIs was formed, of which Murray was a founder member. The Faculty has maintained records of its proceedings and its involvement with key events including the *Britain Can Make It,* Exhibition,

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[89] In 2001 it organised and staged a major exhibition of Keith Murray glass which brought together pieces that were not available for study in public collections.

[90] Records in the archive document how it propagandised that programme through lectures, exhibitions, articles and even, in 1938, a television broadcast at the BBC. These include: papers relating to the Company's involvement with exhibitions, reports on major exhibitions and trade fairs in Britain and abroad, transcripts of lectures arranged by the Company at Goldsmiths' Hall, lectures given by Company staff at other locations, trade papers and correspondence, files on makers and/or designers (including Keith Murray) and files relating to significant Company employees and members, especially, Graham Hughes.

[91] It would seem that they were either copied from Mappin and Webb own catalogue (see Appendix II for details) or that the photographs in both that catalogue and the Goldsmith's archive came from the same original negatives, possibly related to the displays at the *British Art in Industry Exhibition*, 1935.

London, 1947 and the *Festival of Britain*, London 1951.[92] The records provided evidence for evaluating Murray's involvement with issues relating to designing for industry in the post-war period, when he no longer worked as a designer.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Library, London is an important source for published texts, both books and periodicals, relating to architecture and design relevant to this thesis.[93] The library's index of architects was valuable in order to study Murray's career and achievements as an architect as well as a designer.[94] The library holds RIBA Associates Nomination Papers which were useful to confirm relevant biographical details related to his training and professional practice.[95] The RIBA archive also contains some material relating to the DIA.[96] Of particular interest to this study were the references to Murray and his work (including an article by him); discourse relating to (and promoting) Swedish approaches to design reform and discussion around the themes of designing for industry in general.[97]

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[92] The RDI archive contains individual box files of information for each Faculty member, most of which are in the process of collation. As a long serving member of the Faculty, Murray's involvement on the various committees up to 1961 is recorded

[93] Key journals include: *Architect's Journal; Architectural Review; The Builder, Design For Today; Ideal Home; The Royal Institute of British Architects Journal; The Studio* and *Decorative Arts Yearbook.*

[94] I noted problems with the entry for Keith Day Pearce Murray as some buildings by another and younger architect, also called Keith Murray, have been wrongly attributed to the older architect. Ironically, the younger Keith Murray, of the partnership of Murray and Maguire, is noted for reviving aspects of the Arts and Crafts tradition, thus periodical references cross referenced from the name index give the impression that Keith Day Pearce Murray, respected for Modernist structures in pre-stressed concrete, had a change of heart in later years and began to explore vernacular forms and details instead. These mistakes in the index caused some confusion for at least one journalistswriting Keith Day Pearce Murray's obituary, published in 1981. See 'Obituary, Keith Murray', *Daily Telegraph,* 5th May 1981.

[95] This file includes Murray's Nomination Paper dated and approved in 192. Information was supplied by individual candidates and details education, training, and current employment at the time of nomination.. The file of RIBA Fellows Nomination Papers indicates that Murray was nominated to Fellowship of the Institution in 1939.

[96] These include annual reports, rules and lists of members, 1916 -1939 (some years missing); Yearbooks and Almanacs, 1922 -1964 (some years missing); and quarterly and monthly journal, magazines and news sheets, 1916 -1936.

[97] See Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', *Design for Today*, June 1933, pp 53 -56.

(iv) Published source material

Key journals of architecture and/or design of the period, especially *Architectural Review, Design for Today* and *The Studio* were examined in order to ascertain how examples of Murray's work were disseminated through illustrations and review articles. Exhibition catalogues, published reviews and reports of significant exhibitions (c 1925 - 1976) especially; *Reports on the Present Position and Tendencies of the Industrial Arts as Indicated by the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts*, Paris, 1925; *Swedish Industrial Art*, London, 1931; *British Art in Relation to the Home,* London, 1933 and *British Art in Industry*, London 1935 were used to interrogate official discourse pertaining to both Modernist design and designing for industry and determining the public recognition accorded to Murray as a significant designer.

The major trade journal of the period, *Pottery Gazette and Glass Trades Review,* [*PGGTR*] allowed a parallel analysis of trade and industry's attitude to innovatory design. Other commercial material, especially display advertisements in journals and magazines, brochures and catalogues produced for commercial exhibitions and promotions have enabled a critical investigation of the appropriation of the design reform message for the purpose of commercial promotion.

Methodology

Methodologically this study combines elements of conventional decorative arts research and analysis, with regard to its focus on one designer and to that designer's output, with a rigorous and detailed analysis of critical and theoretical writing about British design of the inter-war period.

Field work

A major part of this study has been to locate and review the broad range of primary literature and source material, for example collections and archives,

relating to the subject, as outlined in the section above on source material. This was not restricted to the United Kingdom nor to English language publications. It was necessary to undertake a field trip to Sweden, where important archive material and collections of artefacts were located at local and national museums, a national design organisation, glass firms and a ceramic firm. Details of principal archives, museums and other primary sources in Britain and Sweden are set out below and supplementary sources are listed in Appendix II

Biographical details

This thesis aims for a detailed contextualised assessment of Murray's contribution to design during a specific historical period. In order to do that it is necessary to establish certain details relating to his short career as a designer for industry. The most important of these relate to: a) his background, especially his professional training; b) his period of employment with Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood (see Chapters Two and Three); c) his output as a designer; d) his design methodology including his critical reflections on that methodology (see Chapter 4, Part One) and e) his success in terms of public and official recognition of his achievements in design.

Terminology

An important aspect of this study is revising and challenging Modernist discourse relating to British design and design theory of the inter-war period. Therefore some discussion of specific terms pertaining to design, for example, *Modern Movement, modern* and *moderne* is necessary, (See Chapter One, Part One). My definitions frequently differ from those of earlier writers who did not have the longer historical perspective from which I am able to benefit especially that of post-modernism.

Economic and industrial history

This study places great emphasis on analysing both Murray's writings about design and his design methodology in the context in which he worked that is, in relation to the two manufacturing firms, Stevens & Williams & Wedgwood. Thus it demanded historical research into those firms and the industries they represented encompassing manufacturing techniques, key products and markets, and economic and technical aspects of modernisation. It was important to establish the broad economic climate in which they operated in the 1930s thus it draws upon source material and methods associated with economic industrial history. Thus analysis was undertaken of official trade figures in order to formulate statistical evidence relating to the economic performance of specific sectors of the ceramic and glass industries. However, although this study is partly informed by research into economic historical data, its principal purpose was to support the aims of this design history thesis.

Oral accounts and interviews

In the 1980s I conducted several interviews, either orally or through correspondence with some of the people who had worked with Murray, or manufactured or sold his designs at Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood as referred to in this thesis. Those accounts have contributed substantially to my understanding of Murray's working relationship with both firms and detailed knowledge of the production methods that Murray encountered at the firms has informed my understanding and analysis of Murray's design practice. Working with primary accounts is useful to corroborate facts and to elicit explanations of methods and techniques but such 'evidence' is highly dependent on the accuracy of individual interviewees' memories. In the case of this study some of the interviewees were recalling the events of over half a century ago, so for example, dates had to be checked against other documented sources. Another problem with first hand accounts is that of maintaining a critical distance in order to ascertain the subjective bias of the interviewee. It was especially important for this study that the discursive concepts associated with the Modern

Movement in design, especially that of the parochial manufacturer who was resistant to the design reform ethos, did not colour my own interpretation of the views and opinions expressed that seemed at first to be antithetical to Modernist design and/or to Murray's approach to design. Subject to those qualifications, interviews and oral accounts, especially with those associated with making or selling Murray's designs have enriched the primary evidence and contributed to a more complex field of study for critical analysis than was hitherto available.

Discourse analysis

The principal focus of this study is on the formulation and promulgation of progressive ideas about design in Britain during the inter-war period. It aims to account for and to track that influence on Murray by identifying and analysing discursive content relating to design reform, design practice and exemplary design as promulgated in journals, exhibition publications and official reports. The same approach is applied to the promotion and reception of Murray's progressive designs whether specifically related to the design reform movement or within the commercial sphere as for example, promotional material and published reviews of Murray's designs in the trade press. A key concept drawn on for analytical purposes in this study is that of propositional discourse which, according to Roland Marchand, shapes its appeal in terms of representing commercial products as 'modern' lifestyle accessories. Thus discourse analysis in this study is not confined to linguistic texts as discussed below.

Analysis of visual material

A distinctive aspect of this study is the use of visual source material, especially photographs and drawings of Murray's designs. Extensive use of visual material is made for case studies in Chapter 5 which examine stylistic variations in Murray's oeuvre. In some cases this analysis is employed in examples ranging across three media to compare and contrast the work in terms of a) style and b) production. It would be expected to find a range of illustrative examples in a thesis of this kind, but it has frequently employed visual examples in a more empirical way for the purpose of analysis. One such example is the analysis of

illustrated advertisements in Chapter 4 which employs a content-oriented approach in order to interrogate both visual and linguistic content relating to design discourse. Thus it is employed, not for quantitative purposes but to establish key themes and propositions.

Chapters

The thesis is organised into a series of broadly thematic chapters. **Chapter 1** critically evaluates those aspects of progressive design in Britain in the inter-war period that shaped Murray's approach to design and his subsequent reception in progressive circles. **Chapter 2** analyses Murray's working relationship with Stevens & Williams and defines the range of designs he made for glass. It does that in the context of a detailed examination of the problems besetting the traditional sector of the British glass industry, especially those concerned with the modernisation of production and design. **Chapter 3** is a detailed critique of Murray's working relationship and designs in ceramics for Wedgwood in the period before and following the Second World War. It evaluates Murray's role both as architect and designer in the wholesale modernisation of Wedgwood's products and production methods during that period.

Chapter 4 critically examines the emergent role of the industrial designer in the context of traditional art industries and analyses Murray's writings about the role of the designer in industry, which showed that he supported the philosophy and ideals of the Modern Movement in architecture and design. It considers how the particular presentation of Murray as 'designer for industry' in progressive sectors of the contemporary design press, and especially through discourse relaying to didactic design exhibitions, was shaped by and in turn supported the Modernist ideal of the singular heroic or 'pioneer' designer. Furthermore it examines the presentation of new 'designer-ranges' in promotional discourse, such as brochures and display advertisements that promulgated the 'designer' concept to retailers, buyers and the consuming public. **Chapter 5** explores the aesthetic and stylistic variations that constituted Murray's interpretation of a Modernist aesthetic and demonstrates that his design repertoire embraced a far

broader range of stylistic traditions than has hitherto been acknowledged. The concluding chapter reflects on and summarises the chief constituents of Murray's Modernist aesthetic and assesses how this detailed study of the design, manufacture, marketing and critical reception of Keith Murray's glass, ceramics and metal problematises orthodox histories of British design of the inter-war period.

Conclusion

The historiographical section identified certain inconsistencies in the ideas that underpin the writings about Keith Murray and his designs which in themselves justify both the critical objectives and the monographic approach of this case study of British industrial design in the inter-war years. However, in order to expose and critique those over-arching critical frameworks that assign hierarchical value to individuals and styles, the study demands a more inclusive analytical framework, which is not over-determined by, or limited to, historically shifting critical conceptions of Modernism. That approach requires a broader and more rigorously contextualised account and analysis of Murray's work pertaining to its conception, production and dissemination as set out in the chapters that follow.

Chapter One

Progressive design in Britain in the Inter-war Period

Introduction

This chapter explores and considers the various progressive attitudes to design that informed Keith Murray's design philosophy and methodology and which underpinned certain contemporary critical responses to his work. 'Progressive', in the context of this thesis, describes the whole range of what can be seen as conscious/reflexive and discursive approaches to design theory and practice, especially pertaining to industrial production. Murray's initial approach to design when he began his career as a freelance designer in 1932, (he had been reflecting on the decline in design standards of British glass since 1925), indicated that he had progressive ideals.[1] These stemmed in part from his awareness of design innovations on the Continent and in Scandinavia and also from his awareness of and involvement in the design reform movement.[2] A central concern for this study is the credence given to one particular progressive approach to design in the 1930s, that is Modernism, initially by design commentators, critics and theorists and subsequently as reproduced by historians. Part of that investigation is the closer look at definitions of key terms within the Modernist rhetorical lexicon that follows in Part One.

A problematic factor is that Murray produced most of his work and established his reputation as a designer in a decade when design, especially designing for industry, took on a new and heightened significance. Part Two of this chapter aims to identify and account for the various ideas and influences (in terms of both stylistics and design philosophies), which were influential in shaping Murray's interpretation of Modernist design. So it delineates and critically evaluates the various strands which constitute the design reform movement in

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[1] See Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', *Design For Today*, Vol. 1, June 1933, pp 53-56.

[2] Murray was a member of the major British design reform organisation, the *Design and Industries Association,* (DIA), during the 1930s. Other factors that are indicative of a progressive outlook, which are less easy to substantiate, include the fact that he was a trained architect, worked in a large modern architectural practice on large scale projects and taught architecture at the Architectural Association School, where many of the younger generation of architect-designers, including R.D. (Dick) Russell and Marion Pepler, trained in the 1920s.

Britain in the inter-war period. There can be little doubt that the gentle progressiveness of the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, was a major influence on design reform in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s, a factor that is examined in depth in order to understand how and why Murray interpreted various aspects of Swedish design in his version of Modernist design. Thus this part of the chapter also shows how the propagandising of the DIA was important in making designers and certain sections of the British public aware of approaches to design in other manufacturing countries.

From a post-modern perspective, design historian Paul Greenhalgh recognised that Modern Movement designs represented only a minority of the design output of the twentieth century.[3] Nonetheless, it was a significant minority in terms of establishing certain orthodox positions in post-war Britain with regard to design criteria and design education. That disproportionate predominance was legitimised by the progressive ideals that underpinned the ethos of the Modern Movement and was validated by the supposed rationality and morality of its design philosophy. 'Good' Modernist design was critically associated with the ideals and principles of Bauhaus and as a consequence, for much of the twentieth century design historians continued to recognise the Bauhaus and its methodology as the most important model against which progressive British design of the inter-war period could be evaluated. Part Three of this chapter examines how that the Bauhaus 'message' was received and disseminated in Britain in the inter-war years. It analyses how and why the scientific rationalism of the Bauhaus has been perpetuated as an index of advancement in British design methodology with particular reference to critical evaluations of Murray's work and status as a Modernist designer.

[3] Paul Greenhalgh, 'Introduction', in Greenhalgh (ed.) *Modernism in Design,* Reaktion, 1990, p 2

Part One: Discussion and definitions of key terms

Progressive design

The term 'progressive' covers a broad spectrum of activities and tendencies in both design practice and theorisation, from the pursuit of new styles with a distinct 'twentieth century' inflexion to the formation of groups and associations concerned with instituting design reform. At the extreme end of that spectrum were those 'progressives' whose philosophical, ethical and aesthetic ideas about design were inscribed in what was called the Modern Movement. An issue for debate from a post-modern perspective is whether that whole spectrum of progressive design constituted in its entirety the Modern Movement in design. Suffice it to say that accounts of the period written from a Modernist perspective indicate that pro-Modernist reformers were uncompromising in their view that they had a higher and more radical agenda than others engaged in promoting new approaches to design and to design reform.

However, such a historically contingent position is problematic because of its subjectivity and its transience. Even the arch-Modernist, Nikolaus Pevsner revised his own perception of progressive design after the Second World War. He was prepared to broaden his criteria to embrace a hitherto reviled commercial modernism, which he had previously denounced for its regressive, decorative tendencies.[4] From that post war perspective he began to see all the progressive trends in design from the latter part of the nineteenth century onwards (in Pevsner's terms, those which demonstrated a conscious rupture from historical styles), as part of an evolving critical mass that together constituted the Modern Movement

[4] Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Postscript' to Michael Farr, *Design in British Industry: a Mid-century Survey*, Cambridge 1955. pp. 314 - 315

The Modern Movement

The **Modern Movement** refers to the period dating from the second half of the 19th century, which saw theorists and practitioners striving to formulate new analytical approaches that exploited and expressed the character and technics of the **Modern Age**.[5] In his teleological history of the Modern Movement in art, architecture and design Pevsner broadly outlined its formational period as approximately 1851 –1919. His chronology progressed from the machinery, machine-made goods and iron framed buildings of the mid-19th century as epitomised by the gigantic prefabricated Crystal Palace building and concluded with the foundation of the Bauhaus School in Weimar, Germany in 1919.[6] Pevsner identified Walter Gropius' leadership of the Bauhaus as marking the conscious and programmatic implementation of a more theoretically–grounded, artistically and technically integrated and institutionally established phase of the Modern Movement in design. Greenhalgh identifies two major phases of that movement in design: the first (c 1914 – c1933) he called the 'Pioneer Phase', the second (c.1932 - late 1970s) the 'International Style'. As a consequence of their overlap, the 1930s he argues '…were confusing years of transition from one state to another, with varying levels of 'pure' Modernism ... in various countries.'[7] Only a small number of British designers aimed for or achieved that standard of 'pure' Modernism in their work during the 1930s.

There have been substantial challenges to the Pevsnarian model and debates about the decline of Modernism as a major influence on architecture and design.[8] Greenhalgh argues that the redundancy of Modernism as philosophical and methodological approach to design was signalled by the advent of a substantial Post-modernist [sic] discourse about design in the

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[5] The **Modern Age** or **Modern Period** (c. 1790 – c. 1970) refers to the broader historical era marked by political and industrial revolutions in the formulation of a post feudal, industrialised, urbanised and increasingly atheistic world.

[6] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, Faber, 1936

[7] Ibid, pp. 2-3

[8] Modifications and challenges to the Pevsnarian historiographical account are discussed by Clive Dilnot in 'The State of Design History, Part I', see section 2 'A focus on Modernism', in Victor Margolin (ed.), *Design Discourse: History, Theory, Criticism,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1989, pp 223 –226.

1970s.[9] There is a widely held view that post-modernism marks a new post-industrial, post-colonial era in which fundamental philosophical shifts are paralleled by major advances in technology and an increasingly globalised marketplace. However, there is a persuasive counter-argument that certain aspects of contemporary British architecture represent an advanced stage of Modernism, which has been subject to both internal philosophical revolutions and external changes.[10] In this study, the term **post-modern** denotes specific shifts away from the limited critical frameworks that dominated much of the writing and discourse about design in the 20th century and which has tended to privilege certain qualities in a hierarchic and orthodox manner and has undervalued or ignored others.[11] In that respect, Greenhalgh's argument that the intense historiographical revision of the Modern Movement from the 1970s marked the waning of its influence, especially with regard to design is useful for determining the broad historical parameters for this study.

Modernist terminology

Part of the problem for this study is the inconsistent use of terms associated with writings about the Modern Movement in design. Uses and meanings of key terms are both subject to individual interpretation and prone to change over time. Farr's *Design in British Industry: a Mid-century Survey,* (hereafter, *Survey*), demonstrated that, even as early as 1955, defining the terminology relating to British Modernist design discourse was problematic. Farr

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[9] Greenhalgh. Op.cit. p.1

[10] That is certainly the view of one of Britain's foremost architects, Sir Norman Foster. See his 'Foreword' in (Peto, J and Loveday, D eds.) *Modern Britain 1929 – 1939*, exhibition catalogue, Design Museum, London, 1999, pp 11 – 12. Foster's remarks concerning British architecture (not design) asserted that '… the Modern Movement in Britain, now in a more mature phase, has never been healthier or more vigorous.' Ibid p 12.

[11] Reyner Banham offered an early history of the antecedents of International Style architecture by the art historian, Siegfried Giedeon as a key exemplar of that historiographical approach. According to Banham, Giedeon's *Bauen in Frankreich; Eisen, Eisenbeton*, Leipzig, 1928, was premised upon making clear connections between 19th century rationalist architecture and the International style architecture. Giedeon was interested only in the most progressive examples so his approach was to omit any reference to or discussion of other styles, developments or theoretical approaches. Those were extraneous to the modern art historian's programme of tracking '…beginnings and – despite all the debris that overlays them - to bring out the continuity of development… out of the vast complexity of a past period to expose those elements that become points of departure for the future.' Cited in Banham, R. *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, op cit. p 310.

introduced and defined a set of terms relating to designing for industry.[12] Key definitions were *design* (noun), *modern* (noun and adjective), *modernist* (noun) and *modernistic* (adjective of *modernist*) the latter two referring to popular versions of contemporary styles post-1925 and are discussed in more detail below. His interpretation of *modern* design was 'related exclusively to creative work in a contemporary spirit and of positive value', a broad and seemingly inclusive definition. The breadth of that definition implied that the rigid orthodoxies of rationalism and functionalism which dominated Modernist discourse in the inter-war period had been relaxed in favour of a design methodology that was socially-grounded and aesthetically relevant in terms of a post-war zeitgeist.

This discussion of terms used by critics and historians in relation to a relatively small number of innovatory designs emanating from Britain in the 1930s recognises a particular aesthetic associated with the Modern Movement. Indeed, less than two decades after he wrote his seminal texts on Modernism and the state of design in British industry in the 1930s, Pevsner recognised that his conceptualisation of what he termed 'modern design' was determined by a certain narrow set of aesthetics. From a post war perspective he identified a set of aesthetic preferences which he and other Modernists had sought out and endorsed in British design of the 1930s.[13] Reflecting on the pre-war period he wrote:

> '...there was in the best design in Britain something of that dictatorial quality. Ornament was taboo - ...Modern was rectangular, smooth, even puritanical. It was easy at that time to define what we meant by modern design.' [14]

It was that stylistic category described by Pevsner to which Jennifer Hawkins assigned Murrray's designs in glass and ceramics and categorised as 'International Modern'.[15] It also

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[12] Michael Farr, Op.cit. *Survey,* pp. xxxvii - xxxviiii .

[13] Nikolaus Pevsner's *Enquiry* was written following his major survey of manufacturing trades in the Midlands and of design organisations and institutions in 1935, subsequently published as *An Enquiry into the Industrial Arts in England,* by Cambridge University Press in 1937, (hereafter *Enquiry*). Michael Farr's *Design in British industry: A Mid-century Survey,* Cambridge, 1955, was conceived as the second edition to Pevsner's study and was the result of a similar survey undertaken at Cambridge University in 1953. Pevsner wrote the introduction to Farr's book and a postscript essay which commented both on Farr's ideas and also on shifts in his own ideas about modern British design.

[14] Nikolaus Pevsner in Michael Farr, op.cit. *Survey,* p. 314.

[15] Hawkins, op.cit, *Thirties* (ex. catalogue), p. 94

concurs with Greenhalgh's recognition of an International Style in progressive British design by the 1930s. For the purpose of defining terms for this study, the titular version '**Modern Movement**' is used to identify those British designs (including those by Keith Murray) that Pevsner and Farr recognised as sharing the ideals and/or aesthetics of the Bauhaus and other aspects of European Modernism. Taken together the set of factors including: (i) the historical specificity of the period in which they were designed (i.e. c.1930 – c.1939); (ii) the relatively low numbers of designs produced and (iii) the narrow range of aesthetic considerations relating to their designs suggests that collectively they constitute a style (or in Greenhalgh's terms a 'phase') rather than a movement. The terms **Modernism** (noun) and **Modernist** (adjective) are used to identify and describe those progressive tendencies associated with the ideals and aesthetics of the **Modern Movement** and **Modernist** (noun) to describe those practitioners who subscribed to those tendencies.

Functionalism

Farr at the very outset of his explication of terminology concerning 'industrial designs' was at pains to set out the importance of *artistic* (or aesthetic) qualities alongside the more pragmatic concerns of the *functional*. The latter implied those '… utilitarian, durable and economic properties in a design.'[16] It is likely that Farr was drawing upon Read's explanation of function in *Art and Industry,* which starts out by defining function in terms of use value, that is, he argued that form was not necessarily determined by function.[17] However Read's discussion developed into a more complex treatise on synthesis and creativity whereas Farr's theorisation of aesthetic factors as separate but complementary to functional factors of *modern* design sets his definition apart from the determinist idea that the term 'functionalism' came to assume in Modern Movement rhetoric.[18] It is clear from the photographic

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[16] Farr, op.cit. p. xxxvii

[17] Herbert Read, Art and Industry: the Principles of Industrial Design, Faber, 1934, p 43.

[18] The implication of functionalist ideology was that objects and buildings were not 'styled' in any conventional sense of the word, but that 'form followed function' implying a scientific design methodology for the machine

illustrations through which Read exemplified his concepts of form and function that he considered architecture and objects by Bauhaus designers and students to embody the synthesis of both to the highest aesthetic standards.[19] Bauhaus designs were generally understood to stem from and express functional aspects of usage, materials, construction and production methods as will be discussed in the final part of this chapter. Suffice it to recognise here that the Bauhaus explored and promoted a more rigorously analytical approach to architecture and design in the late 1920s, which has subsequently been called functionalist. The blind spot in such a conceptualisation of functionalism was that it privileged principles of construction over practicalities of usage. Such a formal bias reflected the influence of and reverence for Constructivism amongst the principal promoters of Modern Movement architecture and design, especially Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Hannes Meyer at the Bauhaus.[20]

Not all Modernist conceptualisations of functionalism derived from Constructivist models. For example, when the glass historian Ada Polak described Murray's contribution to a functionalist movement in glass she explained that her version of functionalism referred to

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age. The American Architect, Louis Sullivan, (1856 - 1924), famed for his early skyscraper designs of the late 19th century, coined the dictum 'Form follows Function' as part of his treatise on new architecture. (See Sullivan, L. *The Autobiography of an Idea*, 1924, republished, Dover, New York, 1956.) 'Form follows function' has been extensively quoted in discussions about Modern Movement architecture and design but Sullivan never envisaged an architecture, even for commercial buildings, which did not have organic ornament integral to its design. His concern was that buildings should be designed to reflect and express functional aspects relating to usage, materials and construction methods. He used ornament to give emphasis to constructional elements of his designs, for example to stress the horizontal lines of steel frame buildings. Sullivan's profound respect for ornament and his theory of organic design were a legacy of Gothic Revival principals regarding the construction and decoration of buildings. His dictum was not intended to promote a scientific/rationalist methodology culminating in the severe formalism of the International Style nor did it intend to make ornament redundant.

[19] Illustrations include; workers housing designed by Gropius and partners; glass coffee machines and porcelain storage jars designed by ex-Bauhaus students (but not stated as such); earthenware coffee set 'designed by Otto Lindig at the Bauhaus, Germany'; porcelain distilling vessels and mortar designed by ex-Bauhaus student (but not stated as such); glass tea-service and Durax heat-proofed cookware designed by Wagenfeld (ex-Bauhaus); metalwork coffee service 'by Marrianne Brandt at the Bauhaus, Germany'; electric hot water jug in metal 'deigned by Jümpel, Bauhaus, Germany'; aluminium lampshade 'designed by Marrianne Brandt...'; reading lamp (either Brandt or Wagenfeld but not stated); electric lamp 'designed by N.Slutzky at the Bauhaus'; and 'two steel chairs, designed by Mies van der Rohe'. Herbert Read, op.cit.

[20] For a more detailed discussion of the influence of Russian Constructivist ideas on leading thinkers, who in their turn, were influential a the Bauhaus during the 1920s (especially Laszlo Moholy Nagy and Theo van Doesburg) see Reyner Banham's chapter: 'De Stijl: the international phase', in Banham, *Theory & Design in the First Machine Age,* Architectural Press, 1960, pp 185 -200

what she saw as a 'Functionalist aesthetic' that had its various manifestations in glass making in Britain, Continental Europe and the Scandinavian countries between 1915 and 1940.[21] It was also clear from the diverse examples she discussed within that category that her concept of Functionalism [sic], which she argued was a contradiction in terms when applied to Art Glass, was based on rational principles concerning materials and forming methods and a highly formalist approach to ornament.[22] These principles were closer to the rationalist ideas of Sullivan, and to Arts and Crafts notions of honest expression of construction than, for example, to the analytical functionalist approach as promoted in post-revolutionary Russia and at the Bauhaus.

The British architectural historian, Tim Benton, has dispelled the received idea that any architectural practitioners ever interpreted functionalism as a purely determinist design method.[23] However, the discussion above demonstrates that functionalist design occupied a spectrum with the most radical or advanced examples emerging out of the experimental approach of the Bauhaus at one end and examples (such as progressive glass designs from Sweden), which manifested a 'functional aesthetic' at the other end. Whatever the distinctions between those two, key aspects of both were a concern for aesthetics and a rational (if not a Rationalist) approach to use and/or construction. Farr's post-war definition of functionalism implied a disentangling of aesthetics and utility and/or technics, which had been synthesised in the more radical approaches to Modern Movement architecture and design of the inter-war period. It is unlikely that Farr had adopted a revisionist stance in that respect but he, like Pevsner before him, was studying and accounting for industrial design standards by analysing current productions in the place of manufacture which were governed by more pragmatic concerns than their art school counterparts.

The problematic of applying Modern Movement theory to industrial practice is a central theme for this study as Chapter Four will show. It was also recognised by Banham, who

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[21] Ada Polak, *Modern Glass,* Faber, 1962, pp. 38 -65

[22] Ibid. pp. 38 -65

[23] Tim Benton, 'The Myth of Function', in Paul Greenhalgh (ed.) Op. cit. *Modernism in Design,* pp. 41 – 52.

recalled that Pevsner had shown him correspondence between himself and the ex-Bauhaus student and teacher, Wilhelm Wagenfeld. The latter complained that his exemplarary productions of mass-produced glass for the Jenaer factory were harshly judged by former Bauhaus teacher Moholy-Nagy.[24] The particular example he was discussing with Pevsner referred to the adaption of a cylindrical form for a milk jug into a 'drop-shaped' form.[25] Moholy-Nagy objected that they did not manifest the exactitude of geometric form, which he clearly fetishised in his conceptualisation of Modernist design. Wagenfeld's designs for the German glass manufacturers were elegant and often innovative resolutions to the problems of designing for mass production and they fulfilled Modern Movement social criteria in terms of their low price and utilitarian characteristics. Despite being fully conversant with Bauhaus functionalist aesthetics, Wagenfeld clearly believed that a more specifically rational approach was appropriate to industrial production, a belief that he formed from the pragmatic experience of designing for industry. Pevsner's correspondence with Wagenfeld may well have afforded him the key insight that caused him to question his own ideological attachment to Bauhaus precepts. Whether that was the case it should be noted that many of the examples he chose to illustrate progress towards Modernism in *Enquiry* (including ceramics and glass by Murray and table glass from Orrefors) did not manifest the severe formal aesthetic associated with Bauhaus functionalist design of the 1920s.[26]

Machine Aesthetic

The critical focus on the aesthetics of British Modern Movement design, as Pevsner recognised, emphasised a certain set of visual and formal characteristics, which link it with other manifestations of Modernist, moderne and streamlined design from Europe and the

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[24] Banham, op cit. p 282 (no date is given for this correspondence).

[25] Ibid

[26] The particular examples of modern Swedish table glass under discussion were undecorated and had a formal clarity. They were factory made (but not by machines) so in some respects they were close in spirit to Bauhaus designs and represented some of its design principles applied in a commercial semi-industrial context. See Pevsner's *Enqiry* (op.cit.) pp 87 -89.

USA of the inter-war period.[27] The most consistent and universal of these were abstract geometric forms, teardrop forms, the use of 'modern' materials, especially metal and glass, perfection of surface finish and either absence of decoration or restrained mechanistic decoration that emphasised form. All of these characteristics were linked either conceptually or by association to the machine and/or mass production. That 'machine aesthetic' gave much progressive architecture and design of the inter-war period a visual cohesion, regardless of the ideals (or lack of them) to which individual designers subscribed.[28]

Commercial manifestations of the machine aesthetic in, for example, streamlined or moderne styles synthesised both contemporary (even futuristic) styling and machine symbolism. Pevsner applauded the symbolic quality of streamlined design when he wrote

'....streamlining surely expresses the spirit of this age, its conquest of space, its faith in speed, its chase for records. So it has a right to appear everywhere.' [29] However, his rationalist sensibility could not support the streamlined aesthetic applied without discrimination to static machines such as pencil sharpeners and vacuum cleaners or to objects such as soda siphons and chairs because of its inappropriateness in terms of machine symbolism: 'The argument against it is one of qualification. It is incongruous to apply symbols of speed to an easy chair or a perambulator.'[30]

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[27] Design practitioners in the United States, such as Norman Bel Geddes and Raymond Loewy originated an alternative approach to industrial design in the 1930s that effectively de-emphasised constructivist articulation of form and mechanical function. The classic tear drop form associated with streamlining had some scientific grounding in the wind tunnel testing of air resistance factors relating to aircraft wing, tail and chassis shapes. When Loewy, Bel Geddes and other leading industrial designers in the United States such as Buckminster Fuller and Henry Dreyfuss applied monocoque bodies to steam locomotives and automobiles, it looked as though modern design had finally bridged the chasm between art and engineering.

[28] This thematic approach was explored by American historians and curators in an important exhibition, T*he Machine Age in America 1918 –1941,* Brooklyn Museum, New York, October 1986 –February 1987. The exhibition embraced commercial and non-commercial practice and included architecture, design, painting, sculpture, photography and graphic art. The premise was that the machine '...was the defining force in America during the years between the wars'. (Robert T. Buck, Director of the Brooklyn Museum, 'Foreword' to the exhibition publication edited by Richard G. Wilson, T*he Machine Age in America 1918 –1941,* Harry N.Abrams inc. New York, 1986, p.16.)

[29] N. Pevner, 'Postscript', in Michael Farr, op cit, *Survey,* p.317

[30] Ibid, p.317

In more idealistically oriented manifestations, for example Constructivist-influenced Bauhaus designs from the Dessau period, the machine aesthetic was naturalised through the logic of functionalism. The earnest rationality and morality underpinning functionalist design methodology theoretically privileged economy of means, mass production methods and materials, standardisation and constructional integrity over applied styling. However, the synthesis of aesthetic and technical approaches to design as articulated by Gropius in the title of the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition: *Art and Design; A New Unity* was a prevailing theme at the Bauhaus throughout the 1920s, even during its so-called Functionalist phase.[31] Thus despite ideological and methodological differences underpinning streamlining, the moderne (see below) and Modernist approaches, the machine or its abstract qualities (**machine aesthetic**) was the leitmotif for progressive designs of the inter-war period that consciously embraced the spirit of the twentieth century.

'Contemporary' design.

Whether or not one subscribes to the view that there was an international style of design that emanated from the same design principles as the International Style of architecture it is difficult to argue that both shared the same (machine) aesthetic trajectory for any length of time. From a post-war vantage point Farr also recognised a more autonomous conceptualisation of Modernist design that implied a new orthodoxy:

> 'There are many people who...remember the exhibitions, the questionnaires and all the propaganda on behalf of the Modern Movement in the 1930s. Now, since the war, they are hearing less about the Movement but even more about contemporary design standards.'[32]

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[31] Banham outlined at least two conceptualisations of a machine aesthetic that were synthesised into Modern theoretical frameworks of design. Both were associated with the artists and intellectuals associated with the De Stijl group in Holland: one from the 19-teens (inspired in part by machine romanticism of the Futurists) and a later and more abstract concept articulated through the exploration of Elementarist approaches at the Bauhaus in the 1920s. See Banham op cit i) pp151 – 153 and ii) pp. 187 -188.

[32] Michael Farr, Op.cit. *Survey,* p. xxx

Farr used the term 'contemporary' to distinguish the design ethos of post war Modernism from that of the pre-war period. It is apparent that in retrospect, he saw the self-conscious and heavily promulgated designs of the 1930s as representing a proto – Modern phase in preparation for the naturalised Modern Movement orthodoxy of the post war era. Pevsner however disagreed with Farr's version of the term 'contemporary', which he argued promoted a phenomenological account of Modernist design. Pevsner's objection went beyond epistemological correctness. He was keen to ensure that the new positive attitudes of post-war Britain did not elide the historic struggles of the pioneers of Modernism. He recognised that a partial understanding of the Modern Movement was detrimental to its progress. Indeed, in his postscript to Farr's *Survey,* he reflected that the cause of Modern design in Britain might have been better served if the popular embrace of styles such as moderne had been recognised as essentially progressive and taken more seriously by Modernist critics and commentators like himself.[33]

Pevsner interpreted 'contemporary' as an umbrella term for all design of the previous 60 years or so that rejected historicism in preference for new forms and new ornament. So whereas in the 1930s he had railed against decorative and moderne styles, he now acknowledged that the diverse (machine) aesthetics of the inter-war period, whether Art Deco, moderne or Modern Movement, had a certain commonality:

> 'Now we are less puritanical, less exclusive, and therefore can be historically more accurate. The *style* of the straight line and the annihilated ornament is not the whole *modern style of design.* The twentieth century is not a century without ornament, although we shall see that all is not well with contemporary ornament.'[34] (My emphasis).

In retrospect, Pevsner recognised that British Modernist design of the 1930s represented a single discrete stylistic category within a panoply of progressive styles, albeit one that heralded a new design ethos.

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[33] Ibid, Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Postscript', pp. 318 –319

[34] Ibid, Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Postscript', p. 315

Art Deco

Although post-war revisions of the Modern Movement in design envisaged a role for ornament in Modernist or 'contemporary' design aesthetics, Farr was still derogatory in his terminology relating to pre-war decorative design. He used the terms *modernism* (noun) and *modernistic* (adjective of *modernism)* to denote those popular 'artistic' styles of the inter-war period. **Modernistic** is used in this thesis as a collective term associated with forward-looking and populist tendencies in the decorative arts of the inter-war period, which since the 1960s has been called Art Deco. That stylistic approach was popularised by French designers at the Paris 1925 *Exposition International Des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* (hereafter the Paris 1925 exhibition). In its early manifestations it was usually highly decorated and employed contrasting materials to sumptuous effect.[35] Despite the progressive outlook that underpinned the style it was considered to be decorative rather than functionalist and consequently secondary to or even an aberration of the scientific rationalism of the Modern Movement. Thus **Art Deco** in this study refers chiefly to luxurious, artistic and well-crafted objects associated with decorative arts production methods designed in the first three decades of the twentieth century. It embraced several versions including moderne, jazz-modern, modernistic, borax and Mayfair, (the last two being specifically American and British commercial derivations). All of those variations of the inter-war period had their origins in artistic conceptualisations of progressive design but after 1925 it became associated with cheap commercial production.[36]

The term **moderne** design in this thesis refers to another and more sophisticated variation of Art Deco. **Moderne** denotes 'progressive' designs (that is non-historicist and frequently utilising 'modern' materials, for example plate glass, chromed tubular steel and plastics) by

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[35] Art Deco motifs and colour schemes frequently drew upon eclectic versions of ancient classical and other historical and pre-historical forms and motifs including Ancient Egyptian and Mayan as well as contemporary motifs such as sun-bursts or machine parts. They were not historicist in character largely because of the exotic nature of their historical referents.

[36] These later British versions also incorporated elements of popular 'machine' styles such as streamlining and Odeon cinema architecture. Popular, commercialised forms of Art Deco were by no means exclusive to Britain. They were extremely fashionable in the United States after 1925, where designers and manufacturers were highly influenced by the artistic innovations of contemporary French styling. The USA played a major role in popularising modernistic styles to a world audience through both Hollywood films and cinema architecture.

architects and designers dating from the late 19-teens. These modern-looking designs were characterised by their sleek formalism and emphasis on surface and texture rather than decoration. It is frequently difficult, from a historical perspective, to distinguish between versions of the Modernist and moderne designs solely on the basis of visual aspects relating to materials and aesthetics. Distinctions between such designs of the inter-war period frequently lay in differences in design philosophy rather than aesthetics, such as social concerns over commercial ones and radical solutions versus chic styling. Moderne designers were 'modern' in their commitment to new forms and materials and generally to the notion of an avant garde but did not engage with functionalist concerns or social ideals such as radical approaches to housing and furnishings for the masses.[37]

Although moderne design was usually undecorated there was a decorative version incorporating crystalline forms and/or brightly-coloured abstract patterns derived from Cubism, Fauvism and the general synthesis of Modernist painting styles as epitomised by sets and costumes of the Ballet Russes. Pevsner, Farr and their contemporise referred to this decorative style and to its later popularised form as **jazz –modern**. There were other more exclusive adaptations of Art Deco styles promoted by British architects and designers in the late 1920s and 1930s, which at the time were called 'moderne' or 'Mayfair'. Interior designers, hotel architects and exhibition stylists employed these British 'designer' versions which signified both modernity and luxury.

This discussion of terms and aesthetic distinctions lays the ground for the detailed analysis of stylistic influences in the broad range of Murray's designs in Chapter Five.

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[37] A good example, which illustrates these distinctions, is the architecture and design of the Anglo-Irish designer Eileen Gray (1878 - 1976) before and after c. 1920. Prior to that date she had designed innovative and artistic furnishings which epitomised the moderne in their general formal simplicity, sleek materials (especially lacquer work) and Cubist influenced artistic decoration. After the early 1920s she became involved with Modern Movement architecture and design and her work changed direction. Her approach to design became more analytical and her furniture more space saving and/or multi functional. She designed and furnished an uncompromising flat roofed concrete villa, *E1027* in France (1926 – 1929) for which Le Corbusier decorated some interior walls with abstract murals. In her later years she worked on social projects designing workers' housing and health centres.

Part Two: British Design Reform and the Modern Movement in the Inter War Period

A major aim of this thesis is to locate the work of Keith Murray within the broader context of British design for industry and design reform in the 1930s. The beginning of this period was marked by the efforts of British companies to rebuild after the Great War. Its middle years from 1929 to about 1935 saw severe economic uncertainty when world markets were depressed following the Wall Street Crash. The final years of the 1930s were marked by political uncertainties as Britain prepared for the second large-scale war of the 20th century. It was against this background that Murray began his career as a designer. While much was written about designing for industry in the inter war years it would seem that with the exception of those companies and institutions which had direct links with design reform bodies such as the Design and Industries Association (DIA), most notably London Passenger Transport Board, Gordon Russell Ltd. Dryad and Wedgwood, there were few established firms which even changed their design practices, let alone their production processes.

Orthodox histories of the Modern Movement have emphasised the relative backwardness of British architecture and design compared to progressive developments in Europe and attributed it to factors such as the persisting influence of Arts and Crafts principles. Nevertheless, important accounts have emphasised key achievements in British architecture (and to a lesser extent design) in terms of realised projects, publications, significant events such as exhibitions and lectures and the formation of relevant organisations, which support the idea of a small but significant embrace of Modernism in Britain in the inter-war period. It is important to interrogate those accounts, especially where they refer to Murray and his work in order to assess the critical atmosphere in which his designs were conceived and disseminated. Not all of those refer directly to the Modern Movement so it is necessary to identify the range of philosophically-driven individuals, organisations and institutions whose influence on design reform went beyond the conventional commercial impetus to engage with design issues in order to stimulate consumption and/or promote the status of British goods in international markets.

The place of architecture in discussions of Modernist design

Modern Movement rhetoric tended to conflate architecture and design (as in industrial design) into a singular term 'Modern Design'. However, this concealed an internal hierarchy which elevated architectural design and subordinated other design practices. Evidence of that can be seen in the high importance attached to examples of design by Modernist architects including steel furniture by Mies Van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Marcel Breuer[38] and timber and plywood furniture by Breuer, Gerrit Rietveld and Alvar Aalto[39]. A received and broadly held idea is that a theory of Modernist design emerged out of functionalist principles derived from Modern architecture. This was in part due to studies that charted the emergence of the Modern Movement which tended to emphasise the importance of architects in establishing its aims and direction. In Britain that bias was given additional weighting through Pevsner's history of the origins of the Modern Movement, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, which focussed principally on the work of 'pioneer' architects.[40] The high esteem accorded to designs by Modernist architects explains in part why Murray's work received such detailed attention from Pevsner. The first and second titles of Pevsner's book indicate his bias towards architecture in his conceptualisation of both the Modern Movement and Modernist design.[41] Indeed, his reverence for both architecture and the Bauhaus is quite explicit in its text. Its introductory chapter 'Theories of Art from Morris to Gropius' concluded with the founding of the Bauhaus by the architect Walter Gropius: 'Morris laid the foundation of the modern style; with Gropius its character was ultimately determined.'[42] Of the Bauhaus he wrote:

> ...it was to become, for more than a decade, a paramount centre for creative energy in Europe. ...It comprised in an admirable community spirit, architects,

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[38] Marcel Breuer (1908 – 1981) designed furniture for Isokon during his stay in Britain from 1935 – 1937. The most famous furniture designed by Breuer during those years was the Long Chair manufactured by Jack Pritchard's firm, Isokon (1935-1936), in laminated wood and upholstery.

[39] Alvar Aalto's plywood furniture was shown for the first time outside of Finland in 1933 at Fortnum and Mason, London.

[40] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, Faber, 1936. 2nd edition, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, published by the Museum of Modern art, New York, 1949. 3rd revised edition, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, by Pelican, 1960 (subsequently revised in 1975).

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid. pp.38 – 39 (3rd Pelican edition).

> master craftsmen, abstract painters, all working for a new spirit in building. Building to Gropius is a term of wide import. All art, as long as it is sound and healthy serves building.[43]

Historians cannot fail to notice the preponderance of architects amongst the most celebrated of British Modernist designers in the 1930s.[44] This contrasts with the United States where many of the best known designers for industry including Raymond Loewy, Norman Bel Geddes and Walter Dorwin Teague were drawn from advertising and commercial arts backgrounds. In Britain, Wells Coates, Oliver Hill and Serge Chermayeff gained reputations for their design work at least as much as for their architectural work. A major reason why architecture and design were so interlinked in Britain during the interwar period was the lack of training opportunities for designers. Many Modernists including Pevsner continued to argue that architectural schools provided the best possible training for a designer in industry, most probably because the Bauhaus provided a model for design training within a school of architecture. Murray was convinced, through his own experience as a designer, that industrial designers of the future would be trained in architecture because of its potential to develop an aptitude for both formal and practical analysis.[45]

Historical accounts, such as Jeremy Gould's *Modern Houses in Britain, 1919 – 1939* are framed within a now familiar chronology of progressive 'achievements', typically biased towards architecture, which signifies the emergence of the Modern Movement in Britain.[46] Gould's chronology includes an early phase c.1919 –1933[47], a second phase (from 1933 to

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[43] Ibid. pp.38 – 39 (3rd Pelican edition).

[44] Many of the leading younger designers working in Britain in the 1930s were architect-trained including Robert Gooden, Dick Russell and Marion Pepler, all of whom, like Keith Murray before them, trained at the Architectural Association School.

[45] Keith Murray, 'The Designer in Industry: What is the Prospect?', *Journal of Careers*, Jan. 1935, pp. 22 – 24

[46] Jeremy Gould's *Modern Houses in Britain, 1919 – 1939*, 1977. In this detailed analysis Gould divided British Modernist architecture of the inter-war period into three phases: 1919 –1933, 1933 –1937 and 1937 – 1939.

[47] This phase incorporated the manufacture of mass produced, standardised metal window and door frames by the Crittal Manufacturing Company from 1919 onwards, Peter Behrens' design for 'New Ways' in 1925 for DIA member, Basset-Lowke, the publication of articles by leading Continental Modernist architects such as Gropius and Le Corbusier, in *Architectural Review* from 1924 (Walter Gropius in 1924, Le Corbusier in 1926 and 1928), the translation of Le Corbusier's *Vers Une Architecture*, by Frederick Etchells in 1927, the building of two

1937) which was marked by the arrival of émigré architects from Nazi Germany; Erich Mendelsohn and Eugene Kaufman in 1933, Walter Gropius and Erno Goldfinger in 1934 and Marcel Breuer in 1935.[48] Gould argued that a final pre-war phase marked a high point for domestic architecture in the International Style in Britain as exemplified by the building of Connell, Ward and Lucas' concrete house at 66, Frognall, Hampstead in 1938.[49] Given that chronological framework, it is surely significant that in 1936 when his architectural career recommenced after some time without architectural commissions, Murray's first design was for a factory and offices in the International Style (as discussed in Chapter Three).[50]

By 1932 Hitchcock and Johnson had isolated and codified the stylistics of what they titled International Style buildings in Europe and America. In doing so they effectively reduced the utopian principles, which were understood by some architects and theorists to have been fundamental to much European architectural reform after the First World War, to a set of aesthetic symbols. Whilst their aim was to seek consistency, in practice they over-simplified the reality, which this study sets out to challenge with regards to Murray's interpretation of Modernist architecture and design of that period.

Modernist design emanating from the 1930s, excepting for the work of a very few Scandinavian and American designers who were experimenting with organic forms, shares a similar set of aesthetics (in particular a 'machine aesthetic') to those of the International Style

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houses of concrete construction, by Amyas Connell (1928), and Colin Lucas (1930) and the publication in America of Hitchcock and Johnson's seminal text *The International Style*, 1932, which featured several British buildings.

[48] Listed also were the formation of the Modern Architectural Research Group, (MARS) as the English chapter of the the Congrés Internationaux D'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), the establishment of the Tecton Group under the direction of the Russian Modernist architect, Berthold Lubetkin, the formation of the architectural partnership, Connell, Ward and Lucas and the publication of F.R.S. Yorke's, *The Modern House*, 1934.

[49] Modern Movement architecture of the inter-war period began to be subsumed under the stylistic label 'International Style' following on from the publication of *The International Style* by the architectural historian, Henry Russell Hitchcock and the young American architect, Philip Johnson in 1932. The book catalogued and explained a major exhibition of Modernist architecture from Europe and America held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1932. Henry Russel Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, MOMA, New York

[50] This was for the headquarters for Wedgwood's new factory at Barlaston, Staffs. Murray designed two versions of the headquarters, one in a white-walled version of the International style, which owed some debt to Eric Mendelsohn, especially in the detail of the glass stair tower. This version was not built owing, it is said, to impending wartime restrictions on building materials.

in architecture.[51] That was true of Bauhaus architecture and design of the 1920s for which Gropius advocated the unification of 'rational' principles of construction and aesthetic form. The aesthetic ideals manifest in Bauhaus three dimensional designs include emphasis on geometric rather than organic form, flawless light coloured or shiny surfaces, little or no applied decoration and frequently a horizontal emphasis in design of buildings. The same aesthetic approach is evident in many of the examples of British Modern Movement design of the 1930s including metal and glass by Harold Stabler and Bakelite radio sets designed by Wells Coates and metal, ceramics and glass designed by Murray.[52] At issue in this critical study is the extent to which the valorisation of the Bauhaus has distorted many of the accounts of Murray's work and his status as a significant British Modernist designer. That theme is analysed in more detail in the final part of this chapter.

There was also potential for overlap between architecture and design because of the involvement of architects and key members of the British architectural press in design reform activity. An example of the latter was P Morton Shand, editor of the pro-Modern Movement *Architectural Review* and also a leading member of the Design and Industries Association (DIA) in the 1930s. The Modernist architect Maxwell Fry became heavily involved with the DIA, which he regarded from an architect's point-of-view as '...the best available cutting edge available at that time..."[53] Although he recognised that that heritage of Arts and Crafts idealism which underpinned the DIA's design philosophy inhibited the complete engagement with radical ideas from Europe, through immersion in its activities he nonetheless '....began to recognise the possibility of a world in which everything was of a piece and belonged to our

[51] The impetus for a shift from geometric to organic forms, which marked a second phase of the Modern Movement, seems to have originated in Scandinavia. Its origins can be seen in some pre-war design, the most famous example being designs for moulded plywood furniture dating from 1932 by the Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto. There are less well-known examples such as Wilhelm Kåge's ceramic wares for Gustavsberg in Sweden, which suggest a wider experimentation with organic forms throughout the 1930s. In the late 1930s the American architect – designer, Charles Eames and his wife, the painter Ray Eames experimented with designs for furniture incorporating organic forms, inspired in part by the work of the Finnish-born architect Eliel Saarinen and also by the amorphous shapes associated with Surreal versions of abstract painting.

[52] The concept of a homogenising formalist aesthetic is discussed and exemplified in analytical case studies in Chapter Four.

[53] E. Maxwell Fry, *Autobiographical Sketches*, Elektra, 1975, p. 133.

time, and had glimpses in the German magazines that came to us of buildings that reinforced the belief and stirred me deeply.'[54]

Artists and industry

If Gropius's vision of Modern architecture and design dominated progressive design discourse in Britain in the 1930s, there were other important strands affecting design reform in which architectural concerns were not the major focus.[55] Significantly, artists and sculptors engaged in issues relating to designing for industry, inspired in part by the Bauhaus ideal of uniting the arts and partly as a means to project Modernist aesthetics into everyday life. The small, Hampstead-based group *Unit One* formed in 1933 was a collaboration between painters, sculptors and architects. Its members included the artists Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson; sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore; architects Wells Coates and Colin Lucas and the poet, art critic and ceramicist, Herbert Read. *Unit One* was not particularly effective in terms of making radical incursions into designing for industry but it did attach importance to design and it motivated artists to seek out and engage with commercial projects. However, as this study shows, the discourse pertaining to progressive design in Britain between the wars gave greater significance to the role of architects and designers. Yet a parallel history that focuses on the role of art and artists as designers in industry would be able to document a broad range of projects such as the so-called 'Foley Experiment' (in modern china design) and its counterpart glass project culminating in the 'Harrod's Exhibition' of 1934; the Shell Poster Series; graphic designs for London Transport and the numerous textile designs in which artists played prominent roles as designers.

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[54] Ibid. p.137.

[55] One such example pre-dating the 1930s was Dorothy Todd and Raymond Mortimer's book: *The New Interior Decoration: an Introduction to its Principles, and International Survey of its Methods,* Batsford, 1929. The writers looked to both Modern art and Modern architecture, especially the work and ideas of Le Corbusier as important influences in Modern interior design. However, the authors recognised the particular significance of Modern art for interior decoration and for design in general when they wrote: '...For everything interesting in decoration today is a result of the contemporary movement in painting and sculpture. Often the influence is unconscious' (p 12).

Herbert Read's *Art and Industry* (1934)

The progressive artist-designer has a problematic position in the history of the Modern Movement because, although his or her designs may have represented a break with traditional decorative approaches, the relationship between artist and manufacturing firm remained conventional as artist-designers were principally concerned with pattern, decoration or pictorials. Read confronted that problem in *Art and Industry*, a central theme of which was the idea of a shared set of aesthetics in the arts derived from abstract principles, including architecture and design as well as painting and sculpture. Read recognised the emergence of a new and original contemporary aesthetic in the unselfconscious designs of the engineers of the 'machine age'. He argued that the styleless rationality associated with modern engineering had inspired the increasingly abstract art of the early twentieth century.

In *Art and Industry* Read expounded his theory that only at certain phases in the history of the arts, most notably in Ancient Greece and the early Middle Ages in northern Europe, did original homogenous styles affecting all the art and design of those societies emerge.[56] He theorised that the unification of art and design as practised at the Bauhaus was the most relevant model for advancing and universalising a Modern and abstract aesthetic.

Although Read acknowledged that the ideas of Gropius had profoundly influenced him, he did not, as did Gropius and other Modern Movement propagandists, see the architect as the principal originator of Modern form.[57] Instead, his heroic figure was the 'artist', a creative designer who had progressed beyond stylistics into the realm of abstract aesthetics governed by the same rational principles as the modern age of machines. He saw the role of the artist whether painter, sculptor, architect or designer, as advancing those abstract and rational principles into the material world of buildings and objects, especially those made by machine. The formulating and homogenising of Modernist aesthetics, Read postulated, went beyond the mere advocacy of new styles. The role of designer was clearly set to change if it were to

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[56] Ibid. "Introduction", pp. 1- 3.

[57] In his conclusion to the first part of *Art and Industry*: 'The Problem in its Historical and Theoretical Aspects', Read quoted Gropius' address to the DIA in 1934 in which he said: "Our guiding principal was that artistic design is neither an intellectual nor a material affair, but simply an integral part of the very stuff of life." In response to that address Read concluded: "I have no desire in this book than to support and propagate the ideals thus expressed by Dr Gropius: ideals which are not restricted to the written word, but which have been translated into action, made objective in the industrialised world, and there demonstrated their truth and practicability." p.40

be transformed from that of applying art to manufactured objects to that of interpreting abstract aesthetics in order to create new and relevant forms.

According to Read, the 'abstract artist' bore the responsibility of humanising and civilising the machine age, hence the intellectual and moral superiority of 'abstract form' (Read's term for what can now be seen as Modernist aesthetics) over more popular stylistics was endorsed and legitimised. When, in 1935, Wedgwood announced in an advertisement for a ceramic beer mug designed by Murray that Herbert Read had pronounced it to be the finest example of contemporary English ceramics, such approval validated Murray's high status in British Modernist design.[58]

Nikolaus Pevsner's *Industrial Art in England: An Enquiry* (1937)

Just as Read's Modernist text, *Art and Industry*, gave his subsequent pronouncements on Murray's work significance in terms of its reception and critique, so Pevsner's championing of Murray in *Enquiry* was similarly influential in endorsing Murray's reputation as a significant British Modernist designer.[59] His singling out of Murray as a praiseworthy designer (given that he discounted 90% of the manufactured goods scrutinised in his survey as unsatisfactory), aligned him with a small but important vanguard of British designers who were seeking to modernise factory-made goods in accordance with Modern Movement ideas. In his introduction Pevsner set out his credentials to judge standards of contemporary English design as '...one who has tried to follow the ways of the Modern Movement in architecture, industrial art and the so-called Fine Arts on the Continent. *And above all in Germany.*' (my emphasis) [60]

Pevsner's research for *Enquiry* exposed him to factories, shops and the buying public, thus he could not confine his discussion to questions of design. As an immigrant to Britain he recognised class divisions as a retarding factor:

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[58] Read's approval was authoritative in another way in that he had expert knowledge of ceramics and ceramic history through his work as curator, then Keeper of Ceramics, at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

[59] Nikolaus Pevsner, Op.cit. *Enquiry.*

[60] Ibid. p. 9.

> 'One of the reasons why England has been late in adopting this international style is the fact that more contrasts between classes are still in existence in this country than in those that are leading in the Modern Movement. The distance between the rich and the poor is larger than in central Europe; the rich house looking richer and the poor house looking poorer, the clothes of the rich more perfect and of the poor more ragged. This is certainly one of the main obstacles to improvements in English industrial art.'[61]

He questioned manufactures, buyers and shopkeepers and members of the public to try and establish how the different classes were catered for in accordance with broad trends in tastes. He found that class position in English society played a much bigger role in the attachment to certain styles than he had expected and even questioned whether Modern Movement aims could be effectively implemented in this country without considerable '...levelling of social differences'.[62] Pevsner was perceptive in his recognition that Modernism in England was largely the concern of a middle-class intelligentsia. He cited Woolworth's stores as one of the few places where reasonably well designed goods which satisfied Modernist tastes could be bought for little money whereas those British retailers who had a conscious commitment to promoting Modernist design catered for a middle-class market.[63]

Whilst Read theorised that the abstract artist was transforming culture in the machine age, Pevsner argued more pragmatically that the broader acceptance of Modernist principles in Britain might be effected by the upper classes setting the example to those less educated in the understanding of Modern design. Indeed, he invoked the snobbery of the British class system and the subsequent aspirations and envy of the lower classes to create a broad-based demand for well designed machine-made goods. He hypothesised that '...snobbery ...could be a great help to the growing Modern Movement in England, if only more members of the

[61] Ibid. pp. 201 –202

[62] He noted an adherence to classical and reproduction styles in the upper classes, a general preference for plainer, more 'rational' designs by the middle classes and a more complex response at the poorer and bulk end of the market. This included an enthusiasm for 'jazz modern' and modernistic floral styles but also a somewhat arbitrary acceptance of a broad range of other styles including undecorated items with simple, restrained forms. These latter were considered by Pevsner and his ilk to be the very epitome of modern rational design (and thus presumed by design critics to be an anathema to the novelty-loving working class consumer), but were bought by the lower classes when the price was low enough to be generally affordable. Op cit. Enquiry, pp. 201-202.

[63] Ibid. See Pevsner's comment on cheap table glass on sale at Woolworth's stores, p.86.

upper class would give up Chippendale for modern furniture and old Chelsea for Keith Murray.'[64]

Read's *Art and Industry* and Pevsner's *Enquiry* were of seminal importance for the emergent design profession, its educators and for the design reform movement generally because they treated design as an important and autonomous activity, more central to life and culture in the machine age than any other creative form. Indeed, Read theorised that designing for industry was the most challenging activity for the abstract artist. Despite their focus on design aesthetics both were concerned with critically analysing existing conditions and setting out radical changes to design education, professional roles and even to the social relationships between the upper and lower classes. All this was far removed from the more pragmatic ambitions of the design reform bodies that sought to modernise design along more practical lines as discussed below.

The DIA in the inter-war years

The DIA is an important connecting thread between Keith Murray, Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood, all of whom were already members or joined in the 1930s.[65] Founded in 1915, it strove to reform design in the manufacturing industries inspired by the model of the Deutsche Werkbund, (founded in Germany in 1907).[66] From the Deutsche Werkbund was taken a firm commitment to developing and maintaining links with commerce and industry and a policy of design education through exhibitions, lectures and propaganda. The DIA propounded the idea that products which were well designed, well made and tastefully promoted would sell more, both at home and abroad. That commercial objective was clearly inspired by the Werkbund's philosophy which always had the interests of the national economy at its heart. Although it became the most influential British design reform body of the inter-war period the DIA never

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[64] Ibid p. 207.

[65] Firms and institution could have membership of the DIA as well as individuals. Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd. joined the DIA in 1916; Stevens and Williams and Keith Murray were members in the 1930s and 1940s but the membership record is not complete, so the joining dates are not known.

[66] The history of the DIA is complex and only partially written but see Raymond Plummer, *Nothing Need Be Ugly, The First Seventy Years of the Design and Industries Association*, D.I.A., London, 1985.

had as much influence as its founders had hoped for, especially by comparison with the Werkbund. [67]

It is likely that the DIA's stated aim of forging links between designers and manufacturers was responsible for Murray being employed by Stevens & Williams in 1932. [68] Certainly several of its members including Gordon Russell, Sir Ambrose Heal and Harry Trethowan, buyer for Heal and Son Ltd were involved, albeit on an informal basis, in bringing the two together. [69] The particular strand of design reform which influenced both Murray and his employers in the inter-war period was characterised by a conscious striving after 'good design' with an emphasis on ordinary, everyday objects, whether made by hand or by machine. That was the foundational philosophy of the DIA and was premised upon active collaboration between designers and manufacturers. It did not attempt to formulate or prescribe a set of design aesthetics, but rather advocated the notion of 'Fitness for Purpose'. That 'anti-style' position of the DIA owed much to Arts and Crafts philosophy and there can be little surprise to find that the writings of the Arts and Crafts veteran, William Lethaby helped shape its original philosophy. Lethaby criticised novelty of form for its own sake and sought to demystify the design process with explanations derived from Arts and Crafts notions of simplicity such as, 'Art may be thought of as the well-doing of what needs doing'.[70]

Somewhat paradoxically, it was those light manufacturing industries, traditionally associated with the applied arts, such as glass, ceramics, textiles and furniture that were most able to respond to those bodies and individuals who were promoting design reform with particular regard to industrial production. The fact that Murray only designed for industries which were traditionally associated with the applied arts suggests that his (and by extension, the DIA's) much acclaimed contribution to the reform of British design was, in reality limited to those

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[67] In the 1920s and early '30s the DIA campaigned on a broader front than most design reform organisation, including environmental issues. See Raymond Plummer's chapter, 'Getting Away from the Pots & Pans'. Ibid, pp. 27 -30.

[68] Murray's own connections with the DIA at this date are not certain. It is known that Murray often attended DIA meetings in the 1930s and that in 1933, he wrote an article for the DIA's periodical, *Design for Today*, but his induction may have occurred after his meeting with the dynamic and enthusiastic Trethowan.

[69] Both Russell and Heal were DIA enthusiasts and the latter was a founder member.

[70] DIA Quarterly Journal, No1, Sept. 1927. pp 4-5

areas where artists and designers had long had some influence. Indeed, one of the reasons why Murray's designs in ceramics and glass for Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams were so frequently featured in articles and books about Modernist design is that there were hardly any other British firms even attempting to use independent designers with advanced ideas. That does not, however, belittle his contribution to a more radical shift in the role of the designer because, as we shall see in the chapters outlining his relationship with each of the firms, his innovative ideas about designing for industry were not always met with unqualified approval. Murray's designs for Stevens & Williams, Wedgwood and Mappin & Webb signalled a new spirit, which was creeping into rather than sweeping into British manufactured goods.

Since its inception the DIA served as an important conduit for the dissemination of ideas and new approaches from other countries, especially through its members' interests in successful design reform organisations abroad. It propagandised examples of what it considered 'good' design to manufacturers, designers and consumers through publications such as yearbooks and periodicals as well as exhibitions aimed at manufacturers, designers and consumers. In addition, the DIA organised international tours to Germany, Holland and the Scandinavian countries to look at design and design practice. Although the Deutsche Werkbund was the model upon which the DIA was formed there was also a growing interest in its Swedish equivalent, Svenka Slöjdföreningen, a long established society that had looked after the interest of designers in manufacturing industries since 1840. Svenka Slöjdföreningen, (hereafter Svensk Form), had been reformed along Werkbund lines from 1914, placing greater emphasis on design for commercial production of ordinary everyday objects. The plea of its spokesperson, Gregor Paulsson for 'Vackrare Vardagsvare', (translated as 'more beautiful everyday things'), that had inspired Swedish manufacturers and designers to turn their attention to cheaper utilitarian goods with excellent results, appealed to the democratic spirit of the DIA.[71]

Comparisons were made between the voluntary status of the DIA in Britain and semi-official status of the Deutsche Werkbund and Svensk Form, which enabled them to be more effective

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[71] Svenk Form's president, Gregor Paulsson, articulated the social and aesthetic ideals, which underpinned design reform in Sweden in a booklet, entitled *Vackrare Vardagsvare*, published in 1919. Paulsson's plea for 'More Beautiful Everyday Things' placed emphasis on 'beauty' in the context of domestic goods of a utilitarian nature. Such a philosophy rooted in pragmatic Arts and Crafts notions of "well-doing" and "fitness", was well received not only in Great Britain but also in many parts of Europe, and the U.S.A.

reform bodies. Both organisations were recognised and supported at an official level, a fact which the DIA openly envied. Sir Lawrence Weaver, KBE, President of the DIA in 1928, argued that the Swedish Government's grant to the Svensk Form had not only made it possible to instigate innovative measures to improve design standards, but that such official validation had also engaged the Swedish public with its ideals and policies. [72] The DIA agitated publicly for similar official support from the Government, which it believed was essential to encourage broad public awareness of and confidence in its policies. There can be little doubt that Svensk Form was the model that the DIA chose to emulate and that Swedish design in general was highly influential on the British design scene of the late 1920s and 1930s as will be discussed in greater detail below. However Weaver's writings suggest that he was sceptical as to whether the DIA could be transformed into a semi-official body along the same lines:

> 'As to how far, if at all, or how soon, if ever, it may be possible to enlarge the scope of the DIA on the ambitious lines that are followed in Sweden, I express no opinion. But I confess to being deeply impressed by the achievement of the Svenska Slöjdföreningen, of which I have a definite knowledge, acquired where it can be most sensitively appreciated, in Swedish factories from the life of Swedish manufacturers.'[73]

Official support for the DIA following the *Gorell Report* of 1932

If individuals in the DIA felt demoralised by the apparent progress made by longer established design reform bodies in other countries, they began to have some successes of their own as the momentum of design reform in Britain increased in the early 1930s. Progress was accelerated by a growing network of public, professional and voluntary bodies (often including DIA members). The inter-war period saw the foundation of the British Institute of Industrial Art, (BIIA); the Federation of British Industry's (FBI) Industrial Art Committee and its Designers' Register and Employment Bureau in the 1920s. In 1930 the Society of

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[72] Sir Lawrence Weaver KBC, 'A Lesson from Sweden', *DIA Quarterly Journal*, No.1, September 1927, pp. 4 - 5. In the article Weaver commented on Svensk Form's influential role in instigating and administrating a merit mark for manufactured wares which indicated durability, technical excellence, aesthetic value, usefulness and popular appeal. He proposed that the DIA should itself institute and administer a similar merit mark for British goods. It was thirty years before this came to fruition in the form of the Design Council of Great Britain's 'Design Centre Awards', and even then it lacked the credibility of the Swedish award which included acceptance by the public in the criteria for the award.

[73] Ibid, p. 5

Industrial Artists was established, Unit One in 1933 and the Royal Society of Arts' Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry was instigated in 1936.

Some achievements were on a scale that demonstrated that the DIA could effect real changes at an official level. One of the most significant achievements of the early years of the decade was the appointment of the Board of Trade's Committee on Art and Industry in 1931 under the Chairmanship of Lord Gorell.[74] Official acknowledgement of the DIA's key role in advancing design reform came after the *Gorell Report* of 1932. It acknowledged the key role of the DIA in encouraging design reform and individual members were singled out for their assistance to the Committee in making its report.[75]

The *Gorell Report's* main recommendation, within its terms of reference, was for the establishment of a central body responsible for exhibitions of industrial art in its own permanent London site.[76] An enhanced and continuing role was envisaged for voluntary associations, combined with the British Institute of Industrial Art, to organise such exhibitions and to advise the central body. In 1934, the Board of Trade's Council for Art and Industry (which became the Council of Industrial Design in 1940) was formed in order to implement the Report's findings.[77] Its first Chairman was Frank Pick, President of the DIA, an honour which also reflected the growing stature of the DIA as an official body.[78] It became widely known as the Pick Council in acknowledgement of his personal vision and drive towards design reform.[79]

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[74] See Pevsner, 'The Gorell Committee' op.cit. *Enquiry,* pp. 156 – 7.

[75] The Committee itself included three DIA stalwarts, Harry Trethowan, Clough Williams-Ellis and Noel Carrington, the latter who was personally mentioned for his individual contribution.

[76] Committee on Art and Industry, *Report on the Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade under the Chairmanship of Lord Gorrell on the Production and Exhibition of Articles of Good Design and Everyday Use,* HMS, London, 1932, p.38.

[77] See Pevsner, 'The Pick Council' op.cit. *Enquiry,* pp. 157 -159

[78] Pick had been involved with the DIA since its inception and was its President from 1931 to 1935.

[79] See Noel Carrington, op.cit. pp. 36 – 40.

The first outcome of that initiative was the staging of a contemporary design exhibition, *British Industrial Art in Relation to the Home* at Dorland Hall, London, in 1933.[80] It featured glass and ceramics designed by Murray and was the first national showing of his work as a designer. (See Chapter Four for more detailed discussion relating to the public recognition of Murray's design status). The DIA had pioneered the use of small-scale (frequently travelling) exhibitions to illustrate and promote its concept of good design since its inception but this was one of the first large-scale British design exhibitions that was primarily intended to be didactic rather than commercial.[81] It featured large-scale displays designed by pro-Modernists associated with the DIA, most notably a mock-up of a furnished minimal flat designed by Coates and a weekend house by Chermeyeff.[82] Other sections of the exhibition displayed manufactured household items arranged more conventionally by medium. However, as at the Stockholm exhibition of 1930, the prices of each piece and the designer's name were featured in the display and the exhibition catalogue.

An important aspect of the DIA's effectiveness regarding design reform was the emphasis it placed on the role of the retailer. Founder members included Harry Peach of the Leicester furnishing firm, Dryad; Ambrose Heal of Heal and Son and furniture maker, Gordon Russell who all had shops or showrooms. In the 1930s all three firms promoted modern household accessories in their showrooms including items designed by Murray.[83] By the 1930s there were a number of stores in Britain, which either actively promoted or were entirely devoted to modern furnishings and household accessories.[84] In addition to Heal's and Gordon Russell

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[80] Although not officially under the auspices of the DIA, the role of leading members of the Association in instigating and designing the exhibition was informally acknowledged.

[81] Not only did the art works, architecture and design which Pick commissioned, epitomise the democratic ideals of the DIA but the stations themselves were used in the 1930s to house exhibitions of art and design and so fulfil the didactic aims of the Association.

[82] Such architectural set pieces were innovative for British design exhibitions, although Swedish designers had used mocked-up furnished room sets to display domestic goods since the *Homes Exhibition* in Stockholm, in 1917 to underline the social importance of designing for everyday life. Significantly and in line with those didactic aims, that exhibition was staged in a fine-art setting at the Liljevachs Art Gallery in Stockholm (1917).

[83] In 1929 Gordon Russell Ltd. opened a second showroom in Wigmore Street, London, which specialised in its more modern lines in furniture as well as interior accessories of modern character from Britain, Scandinavia and Continental countries. Murray's designs in ceramics and glass were sold in that setting.

[84] The majority were in London and the Home Counties with a few exceptions, especially in the Birmingham area.

Ltd., certain stores gained a reputation for promoting modern design. These included Croften Gane's of Bristol, Lee Longlands of Perry Bar, Dunns of Bromley, Bowman Brothers of Camden Town, and in central London John Lewis, Fortnum and Mason, Waring & Gillow, and The Medici Society, all of which had DIA connections and sold Keith Murray's designs in the 1930s. The DIA were successful in persuading department stores to host displays of exemplary items selected by DIA members from the stores' own stock lines. In 1934 the DIA staged a large exhibition, *Modern Living* at Whiteley's Store, an event which underlined the importance of enlightened retailing in bringing good design to the British public.[85]

The shift towards a Modern Movement focus in the DIA

Whereas before 1930 the DIA tended to emphasise the traditions of the Arts and Crafts Movement: simplicity, rationalism and 'no-style styles', in the 1930s there was a more specific engagement with European Modernism. The shift towards a more international, uncompromisingly Modern Movement focus reflected a growing familiarity with the ideas of Le Corbusier in France, Walter Gropius at the Bauhaus in Germany and inspired by Gunnar Asplund's presentation of Functionalist design at the Stockholm exhibition of 1930. There was a Modernist–inspired cohort within the DIA in the 1930s including the architect Maxwell Fry, Jack Pritchard founder of the design company Isokon, the architect-designer Wells Coates, Morton Shand and Pevsner. This particular sample of influential members is interesting because each of them had some direct association with Modern Movement architecture and design from the Continent or Scandinavia. Maxwell Fry formed an architectural partnership with Walter Gropius in 1934; Jack Pritchard had commissioned Le Corbusier to make exhibition designs for Venesta Plywood in the late 1920s; Wells Coates had visited Le Corbusier in Paris; Morton Shand was responsible for introducing the furniture designs of the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto to Britain and the USA and Pevsner who came to Britain from Germany in 1933, had first hand experience of the Bauhaus and knew some of the designers.

One of the most publicised achievements which illustrated the aims and the effectiveness of the DIA was the design policy of the London Passenger Transport Board under the direction

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[85] See Pevsner, 'The Design and Industries Association' op.cit. *Enqury*, pp. 159 – 162.

of Frank Pick.[86] Pick, had fostered a policy of commissioning designs from leading artists and designers such as Edward Johnson and E. McKnight Kauffer.[87] He commissioned the architect Charles Holden to design new buildings for the Underground in a Modernist style and in 1930 travelled with Holden to Holland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden to look at modern civic and commercial architecture in these countries. [88] Holden's new underground stations built after the tour were clearly inspired by the 'Red Brick Modernism' associated with the Dutch architect, Willem Dudok and the Swedish architect, Gunnar Asplund.[89] His retention of brick as a building material represents a rationalist interpretation of Modern Movement architectural principles suited to Northern European climates. The DIA's role in promulgating rationalist approaches to architecture as well as design is emphasised here because Murray's architectural work in the 1930s showed that his interpretation of Modernist architecture embraced both 'Red Brick Modernism' and International Style (as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three).

The increasing support in the DIA for Modern Movement architecture and design in the early 1930s is well charted in its illustrated journal, *Design for Today*, first published in May 1933.[90] The illustrations and articles from this period reflect the Modernist views of the editorial board under the leadership of Noel Carrington. Despite the growing sense that the DIA was making significant progress towards the establishment of a Modern Movement in British design, one of its most pro-Modernist members, Maxwell Fry was critical of DIA leadership. He was of the view that resistance to Modernist ideas within DIA circles came from those like Carrington, who could see no further 'than Dudok and Sweden'.[91] There was

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[86] Pick had worked for the Underground Railway Company since 1909, and was Commercial Manager from 1912. When the London Passenger Transport Board was created in 1933, Pick was made Chief Executive.

[87] For an incisive account of Pick and Holden's architectural and design collaboration see Jeremy Rewse-Davies, 'London Transport Design', in op.cit. *Modern Britain 1929 – 1939*, pp. 95 – 106.

[88] Holden's role as architect was expanded to include responsibility for the design lighting and interior layouts, clocks, lamps, seats, and litterbins.

[89] Rewse-Davies, op.cit. pp. 98 - 100

[90] The new monthly publication, *Design for Today*, which replaced the Quarterly Journal, was notable for the high standard of Modernist design of its lay-out, illustrations and advertising.

[91] Fry was referring to Scandinavian and Northern European (especially Dutch) versions of Modern architecture, (sometimes called 'Red Brick Modernism'). So, in that respect his criticism was also aimed at Frank Pick. Personal correspondence with Maxwell Fry, 26th January, 1985

evidently a sense of a radical elitism amongst those who were familiar with the aims and ideals of the Bauhaus. In his recollections of the Modern Movement in Britain in the 1930s, the British Modernist architect and design reformer, Maxwell Fry recalled that '...there were two streams at the D.I.A... one strongly Swedish, crafty, Lethaby, Art Workers' Guildish, and the other to which I belonged, the purer essence of the Bauhaus message.'[92] Interestingly, Fry considered that Keith Murray's designs represented the former 'stream' yet the contemporary reception of his work by Read and Pevsner situated his work firmly in the pro-Modern Movement camp.[93]

The specific duality of Fry's analysis is problematic as my analysis of Murray's designs will show (see Chapter Five) because Murray was both sympathetic to developments in Swedish glass, ceramics and silver design and also familiar with and respectful of traditional British design. Yet other designs by Murray suggest that he was sympathetic to more hard-line Modernist ideas of abstract machine forms. The latter was reinforced in his writings on designing for industry which stress the importance of designing for standardised mass production as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four. Thus the critical reception of Murray's designs by those contemporaries who were engaged with design and design reform captures the complexities and inconsistencies of how Modernism in Britain was conceptualised and promulgated in the decade before the Second World War.

Swedish influence

One particular site of inconsistency that this thesis challenges is the supposition (as indicated by Fry) that Swedish influence was a regressive factor in the development of Modernist design. What Fry deemed to be polarities within the Modernist spectrum may be more accurately described as points on a spectrum with potential for overlap on all sides. It has been demonstrated that Pevsner had no hesitation in citing contemporary Swedish glass as an exemplar of Modern design practice, although he was fully aware that the examples he selected were produced by similar hand and machine methods to those found in any medium

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[92] Ibid

[93] Ibid

size glass factory of the previous century.[94] The fact that Murray's work also appealed to those who favoured Modern Swedish design as well as to those who favoured a 'machine aesthetic', suggests not only that Murray's designs embraced more than a single aesthetic but also that the opposing camps were not as far apart or as oppositional as was imagined. This detailed study of a major British designer who espoused Modernist principles regarding designing for industry and whose work was admired by Modernists demands that such complexities are revisited and consistently unpacked.

'Swedish Grace'

Pevsner's attitude to Swedish glass design highlights the great respect for all things Swedish held by many of the design cognescenti in Britain and America. Indeed, the prevailing 'modern' architectural style in both Sweden and Britain in the 1920s and 1930s was a stripped classicism to which the design writer Morton Shand gave the name 'Swedish Grace'.[95] 'Swedish Grace' was his collective title for an aesthetic comprised in part of Modernist interpretations of traditional Swedish forms and ornament, partly of neo-classical form and ornament and partly of an economy of material and decoration combined with the highest possible standard of design and production. The architecture of 'Swedish Grace' on the one hand acknowledged traditional styles, proportions and craftsmanship and on the other produced buildings that were artistic, rationally planned but not pompous or elitist. 'Swedish Grace' most effectively captures the main elements of the early phase of Swedish Modernism applied to both architecture and design in the 1920s.

In Britain, the influence of 'Swedish Grace' was felt profoundly when the competition for the most prestigious architectural commission of the early 1930s was won by a British entry that was both Swedish and neo-classical in style. Grey Wornum's design for the new headquarters of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) was distinctly Swedish in character, especially in its interiors, which are reminiscent of Ragnor Ostberg's City Hall (1903 – 1923)

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[94] Furthermore, the two designers who Pevsner singled out for special mention, Simon Gate and Edward Hald, had trained and worked in painting and illustration and had established their international reputations as glass artists through their pictorial designs for engraved decorative glass. See Pevsner, Op.cit, *Enqiry* pp 87 -89

[95] See P. Morton Shand, 'Stockholm 1930', *Architectural Review, 68,* July 1930, pp 67 – 72.

and Gunnar Asplund's City Library (1928), both in Stockholm.[96] Maxwell Fry's own rejected design for this flagship building was one of only five progressive designs in the sense of the Modern Movement.[97]

Swedish Modern

That must have been galling to Fry because Swedish architecture had already undergone a radical transformation in the late 1920s, which made the 'Swedish Grace' approach to architecture redundant in its home country by the 1930s.[98] Asplund's designs for the *Stockholm Exhibition* of 1930 significantly marked the shift from the early phase of Swedish Modernism to the abstract formalism and use of new materials associated with European Modernism as epitomised in the work of Le Corbusier in France and Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe in Germany.[99] The integration of Continental-inspired Functionalist approaches to architecture in the design and layout of the *Stockholm Exhibition* in 1930 demonstrated how International Style architecture could be adapted for large-scale public buildings that had popular appeal.

The ethos of the *Stockholm Exhibition,* which was organised as a showpiece for Modern Movement architecture and design, helped to promulgate the myth of an unproblematic embrace of Modernism in Sweden. Great attention was paid to the nature and presentation of artefacts, with regard to modernity of design and general affordability. So both its architecture and its displays seemed to point the way forward for non-elitist design and the development of a Swedish Modern aesthetic. Such was the importance attached to the *Stockholm Exhibition* by both design reformers and Modernists in Britain that the

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[96] Wornum's design was one of 284 entries submitted, the majority of which were in the 'stripped classical' style. See Margaret Richardson, *66 Portland Place,* RIBA, 1984

[97] Ibid pp 10 - 11

[98] Richardson points out that at the time of the RIBA competition British architecture was severely affected by the recession. One of only two other important competitions of the time was for Norwich Town Hall (1932), which was won by S. Rowland Pierce and C.H. James 'in a pure Swedish style'. Ibid p 5

[99] Asplund's successful buildings associated with the stripped classical style,especially the Stockholm City Library influenced the evolution in Scandinavian and north European countries including Britain and Holland of the 'Red-brick Modernism' so despised by Maxwell Fry.

pro-Modernist *Architectural Review* devoted a whole issue to reviewing the buildings and its displays.[100]

British design historian Penny Sparke argued that the Functionalist aesthetic which dominated the Stockholm exhibition of 1930, represented only a temporary phase and was not universally accepted but was accompanied by furious debate and factionalism in Sweden. She set out to analyse 'Swedish Modern' and questioned how '...its component qualities combined to create an almost mythical image in which the whole is almost greater than the sum of its parts.'[101] Research for this thesis has indicated that the 'mythical image' has come about and gained credence partly because of the highly simplified historical accounts in English language publications which set out Sweden's unique contribution to both design reform and to the development and its uptake of the International Style in architecture and design in the early 20th century. The received version that has dominated much of the writing about Swedish design in the twentieth century, as recognised by Sparke's questioning of a potential myth, is that Sweden experienced a short and seamless transition from a traditional craft-based and largely rural society into a modern industrial society enhanced by Modern Movement architecture and design.

At the centre of such orthodox accounts was the role of Svensk Form in promoting both the increasing democratisation of design and also the high standards of craftsmanship and design applied to successful commercial production in Sweden.[102] Svensk Form's success from about 1917 was recognised by critics and design reformers outside of Sweden, and especially in Britain.[103] However, like its British counterpart the DIA, Svensk Form changed its position

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[100] *Architectural Review, 68,* July 1930

[101] Penny Sparke, "Swedish Modern: Myth or Reality?" in D.R. Mc Fadden (ed), *Scandinavian Modern Design, 1880 – 1980,* Abrams, New York, 1982, p.198

[102] The Svenska Slöjdföreningen, founded by the Swedish Government in 1845 was one of the earliest design organisations in the world. Its aims were to promote both the arts and crafts and the design and manufacture of Swedish commercial goods. Its design philosophy espoused four main tenets which shaped its approach and ethos in the early 20th century. These were anti-elitism in design; the promotion of simple housing and domestic goods for ordinary people; support for traditional craft skills and encouragement of nationalism in design.

[103] The history of Swedish design in the first three decades of the twentieth century is one that is both 'progressive' and, in the terms of the Modern Movement, 'regressive'. The progressive elements were; a commitment to the democratisation of design, a concern for the status of the artist within industry and an appreciation of both factory made goods and of handcrafted pieces. The so-called regression could be seen in the use of neo-classical forms and motifs in architecture and design, a lingering of Arts and Crafts values and a

with regards to specific design reform aims at several points in the early 20th century.[104] Its legendary stature (and the attendant mythical status of Swedish Modern design) has some basis in fact, as evidenced by highly laudatory pronouncements on Swedish design by DIA grandees such as Weaver, but in other respects it is problematic.[105]

An examination of progressive architecture and design in Sweden in the inter-war period, which has been ascribed the idioms 'Swedish Grace' and 'Swedish Modern' implies more than one approach to design. What needs to be emphasised in the light of this discussion on 'Swedish influence' is that progressive design of the 1930s in Sweden was also characterised by a similar dualism to the two streams of Art & Craft influence and Bauhaus influence which Fry saw as representing progressive design in Britain.[106] That dualism was embodied

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deep-rooted concern for decoration in the applied arts. It could be argued that all of these factors could be found to some extent in the architecture and design of any other country at that time, but Sweden differed in that it effectively conveyed to the world a certain universal and unproblematic embrace of Modern Movement principles by Swedish architects, designers, crafts people, manufacturers, industrialists, design reformers, retailers and consumers.

[104] In 1915 Svensk Form instigated a more concerted programme in line with the aims and achievements of the Deutscher Werkbund to bring design to all parts of industry. Swedish firms were criticised by the design reformer, Eric Wettergren, for elitist and 'arty' designs. The revised aim of Svensk Form was to encourage manufacturers to address themselves to the problem of designing for ordinary people. Its first achievement was the establishment of an employment agency for artists who wanted to work in industry. The response of Swedish manufacturers was seen in the didactic *Homes* exhibition, held in the prestigious Liljevachs Art Gallery in Stockholm in 1917. Both the Gustavsberg pottery and Orrefors glassworks exhibited ranges of low cost tableware by their leading designers set out as a series of rooms in which 'modern' simpler furnishings and fittings could be displayed in the context of the home.

[105] Not least problematic from a historian's point-of-view is the impression that radical changes to design were universally accepted by the Swedish public. It would seem that there was some resistance to radical design solutions; hence the didactic purpose of Svensk Form's exhibitions (such as the *Homes* exhibition discussed above). One example of consumer resistance to socially-oriented design relates to the 'Blue Lilly' faience table service designed by Wilhelm Kåge for the Swedish pottery, Gustavsberg. The simple blue on white pottery reminiscent of traditional Swedish country wares was not attractive to a public used to cheap imitations of fine porcelain nor to middle class purchasers who preferred a more refined product. Gustavsberg coyly assert that its 'Workers' Services' as they were first known, were admired mainly by other artists. Despite the acknowledgement of consumer resistance to both the idea and the aesthetic the 'Workers' Services' have subsequently featured in books and exhibitions about Swedish Modern design as an important milestone on the pathway to democratic design. See *Gustavsberg 150 År*, p77

[106] For a useful discussion on this paradox see Anne-Marie Ericsson, 'The Emergence of Swedish Modern Design, 1917 – 1939', in Derek E. Ostergard and Nina Stritzler-Levine (eds) *The Brilliance of Swedish Glass, 1918 – 1939: An Alliance of Art and Industry,* exhibition catalogue, Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, New York, Yale University Press, New Haven, USA, 1996, pp 53 – 65

in the *Swedish Industrial Art Exhibition* held at Dorland Hall, London in 1931.[107] Its influence on British design (and the design reform scene) in terms of conveying the myth of Swedish Modern design cannot be overstated.[108] It was also after the success of this exhibition that the DIA managed to rally enough official support to stage a similar exhibition, *British Industrial Art in Relation to the Home*, at the same location in 1933. The exhibition frontage (a plate glass window display looking out onto Regent Street) was highly influenced by Bauhaus-inspired approaches to design, especially its bold use of *sans serif* lettering. So a link was formed in the British public's mind between the London exhibition and the *Stockholm Exhibition* of the previous year.

The exhibition displays inside Dorland Hall however, were much more in keeping with Arts & Crafts exhibition methods that focussed on design artefacts by medium. That was especially the case with textiles, rugs and metalwork, which were mainly examples of Swedish handicraft work although the displays of modern glass which were dominated by products from the Orrefors factory. [109] According to the organisers, the exhibition aimed to '...build on the Stockholm Exhibition and to some extent to use the same material...' so it is likely that the displays of factory-made glass were similar to those on show at Stockholm. Despite the fact that many of the exhibits were of low-price and undecorated in keeping with Svensk Form's principles of well-designed (and less expensive) everyday goods, there were also numerous examples of fine and elaborate engraved pieces designed by the glass artists, Edward Hald and Simon Gate.[110]

The organisers acknowledged the potential for overlap (if not confusion) in the introduction to the catalogue:

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[107] The exhibition was staged by the Anglo-Swedish Society, with very pro-active support from the DIA. The honorary committee included DIA stalwart Noel Carrington.

[108] I argue in Chapter Two that Murray started to design glass professionally after the staging of this exhibition.

[109] The exhibition plan shows rooms also devoted to 'Artistic Household Artefacts' and 'Ecclesiastical Art'. It is likely that those particular displays were similar to those in the major Swedish Arts and Crafts exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, in 1927.

[110] For example, a special engraved bowl designed by Hald was presented to the then Duchess of York at the exhibition opening. The bowl remained on display throughout the exhibition. The presentation was photographed and shown in the British and Swedish press.

> 'Two vigorous trends could now be seen in Swedish industrial art which to some extent were in opposition to each other – one more traditional, emphasizing [sic} … handwork…; the other a more modern style related to functionalism, which concerned itself chiefly in the creation of quite new and good designs suitable for mass-production and intended for a wider public.'[111]

Thus the exhibition not only embodied the dualistic nature of Swedish Modern but it is probable that it also communicated that 'mixed message' to its British audience.[112]

Pevsner's appreciation of Swedish design of the 1930s is interesting in the context of this discussion about the Swedish Modern 'myth'. It suggests that fundamentally, his own attitude to design was not as extreme as might be supposed from his writings on the Modern Movement in architecture and design, (as was also the case with Murray). About design Pevsner wrote; '...it seems as if today nothing of vital beauty and energy can be created unless it be fit for its purpose, in harmony with the material and the process of production, clean, straightforward and simple.'[113] As a realist, Pevsner may have perceived the simple, inexpensive Swedish glass which was well-designed and produced in quantity in a glass factory (although not by machines) as coming nearer to those stated Modern Movement ideals than the few examples of British machine-made glass he had looked at, but which he largely discounted as being very poor in design.

Pevsner's belief that manufacturers of traditional English glass would benefit from following the example of enlightened Swedish glassmakers was perhaps more realistic than advocating a 'functionalist' Bauhaus-style machine aesthetic. It must have been obvious to him that the

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[111] Author unknown, ' Introduction', *The Catalogue of The Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Art, London 1931,* (Exhibition Catalogue) , 1931 pp 9 -12.

[112] That out-moded eclectic representation of Swedish Modern (despite the fundamental truths which lay behind it, i.e. that Swedish design for manufacture embraced both an Arts and Crafts aesthetic and a machine aesthetic) had clearly been replaced in Sweden by 1930 by a more programmatic ethos as far as didactic design exhibitions were concerned. Evidence of that (besides the illustrations and details reported at the *Stockholm Exhibition* of 1930), was a smaller exhibition held in Stockholm in 1933, entitled *Svensk Stil och Standard.* The illustrated exhibition catalogue (which I saw at the archive of Svenk Form, Stockholm, in 1985), shows factory-made goods that are characterised by a tendency to standardisation, stackability and / or lack of applied decoration. The photographing of exhibits for the catalogue is interesting because it shows multiple versions of items lined up to emphasise the principle of standardisation that same approach was adopted as a feature of the displays and photographic illustrations for the *Machine Art* exhibition, held at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, 1934.

[113] Pevsner, Op.cit. *Enquiry* p.10

independent firms which made up the British 'quality glass' section of the industry were in no position to switch to mechanised mass production. Nonetheless Pevsner, alongside his approval of Keith Murray's glass designs, chose to emphasise the example of Swedish glass made partly by hand methods at the expense of well-designed machine made glass from Germany, Sweden and even Britain.[114]

Murray's own philosophy of 'good design' was based upon his broad aesthetic taste that embraced contemporary versions of the traditional, International Modern and Swedish Modern. His version of the latter was particularly well received in Britain by critics, retailers and informed consumers who were familiar with and admired Swedish design. Given the effectiveness of Svensk Form's propaganda and the readiness of individuals and organisations to believe in the orthodox account of the evolution and wide uptake of a Swedish Modern approach, it is easy to understand *why* Swedish Modern architecture and design became an important model for design reform in Britain in the inter-war period. It is more difficult to explain *how* (and also the diverse ways in which) this influence impacted upon British interpretations of Modern architecture and design. Whilst it is clear that there was a divergence of interests in the DIA during the 1930s, Fry might have done better to isolate at least three strands affecting the most progressive approaches to design in Britain of the inter-war period. I would suggest that the three major streams were (i) rationalist / Arts and Crafts approaches, (ii) Swedish influences and (iii) International Style / International Modern approaches and importantly that all of three were, to some degree or other, inter-linked. An important aim of this study has been to account for and substantiate those influences on the work of one British designer of that period.

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[114] He might have chosen examples more close to Modern Movement ideals; for example, Wilhelm Wagenfeld's designs for mass produced glass; machine made Swedish glass on display at the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition produced by the Malerås Glassbruk. Nearer to home there were British examples of excellent, though largely anonymous, designs for United Bottle and Harold Stabler's designs for, heat-resistant glass for Chance Brothers and Jobling and Company.

Part Three:

The legacy of the Bauhaus in critical perceptions of Modernist criteria for 'good' design

Fry's subsequent recognition of two distinct camps within the DIA at that time identified a Bauhaus-inspired Modernist vanguard and a more orthodox design reform lobby whose ideas had evolved from rationalist and Arts and Crafts traditions. However, it is difficult to establish the exact grounds on which the Bauhaus and its shifting ideologies were received and understood in 1930s Britain (for example there is no mention at all of German design or design methodology in writings about design by Murray). My research has suggested that it was not widely written about at first hand in even the most progressive architectural and design journals in Britain in the inter-war period, (although progressive Swedish architecture and design was consistently reported on in the same journals). Ideas about the Bauhaus and its theoretical and methodological experimentation were largely disseminated through Pevsner and Read's seminal books pertaining to the Modern Movement and after 1934, through Gropius and other ex Bauhaus emigrés when they came to Britain from Nazi Germany after 1933.[115] Its influences and achievements have since partly passed into the realm of myth.[116]

German-born Pevsner continued to revere the ideals of the Bauhaus after the Second World War. He restated his belief in the superiority of the Bauhaus model of design education:

> '...the right introduction to the shaping of everyday things and the development of forms suitable for industrial production is the school of architecture. The Bauhaus, it is true, was unique. But after all, Walter Gropius called it the Bauhaus – that is, the house of building.'[117]

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[115] The architect, Walter Gropius lived in Britain between 1934 and 1937). In 1935 an English translation of his influential book, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, was published. Marcel Breuer, who taught furniture design at the Bauhaus, lived and worked in Britain from 1935 –1937.

[116] It is only in the last twenty years that a fuller history of the Bauhaus School (1919 – 1933) has emerged, which charts its shift from Expressionism to an austere functionalism and in its final days, a highly formal Modernism. An example of a more historically-informed critical analysis of the Bauhaus by a British design historian is Gillian Naylor's second published account, *The Bauhaus Reassessed: Sources and Designs*, the Herbert Press, 1985. In the Introduction she comments that she had been asked to amend an earlier short study, *The Bauhaus*, Studio Vista, 1968, but believed that more thorough revisions and additions in the light of her ongoing research were required.

[117]Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Postscript', Op.cit. Farr, *Survey*, p. 320

Of the next generation of British Modernist writers Farr recommended the teaching methods of the Bauhaus as one of only two commendable examples in the world.[118]

Pevsner and Read remained wedded to the ideals and principles of Bauhaus educational model and as a consequence, design historians continued to recognise the Bauhaus and its methodology as the most important model against which progressive British design of the inter-war period could be evaluated. Evidence of the lasting influence is that when some forty years after the closing of the Bauhaus, British architectural and design scholars evaluated the impact and uptake of Modern Movement principles of architecture and design on theory and practice in Britain, they used the term 'scientific rationalism' associated with the methodological approach developed at the Bauhaus as a critical index.[119]

The design methodology of the Bauhaus, especially under the Functionalist architect Hannes Meyer's influence (c.1927 – 1930), was premised upon analysis of the structural component parts of the design and the individuated articulation of those functional components within the total design of the object. [120] The determining rationale for such a conceptualisation of design (and indeed the Modern Movement in general), was underpinned by utopian credos with regard to delivering the economies of scale via modern mass production techniques, which could transform the material environment of whole populations rather than elite sectors. In that respect socially motivated design was logically construed as the coherent assemblage of standardised and minimalist unit parts. One might consider the extent to which it was ever relevant to evaluate progressive British industrial design of the 1930s against the most radical and experimental aspects of German or Bauhaus–style functionalism. Yet analysis of the Open University course books reveals that the archetypes of that 'scientific rationalism' relating to the design of artefacts were principally Bauhaus designs, especially

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[118] Farr supported the Bauhuas model of training designers although he was arguing that it was no longer appropriate or necessary to train industrial designers in schools dedicated to architecture. The other exemplary school according to Farr was the Institute of Design in Chicago founded by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy in 1937 and originally called the 'New Bauhaus'. Michael Farr, Op.cit.*Survey,* pp 182 – 186.

[119] The study referred to here is the Open University Course A305, *History of Architecture and Design 1890 - 1939*, Milton Keynes, 1975. See *British Design (A305 units 19 and 20).*

[120] Meyer was Head of the Department of Architecture at the Bauhaus in Dessau from 1927 - 1930. He took over as Director of the Bauhaus when Gropius resigned, but was dismissed in 1930 on political grounds.

those by Marcel Breuer, a former student and teacher at the Bauhaus.[121] The 'scientific rationalism' of Breuer's design methodology for furniture, it argued, was manifest in three specific aspects. These were firstly, the use of materials not associated with traditional furniture-making, especially tubular steel and plywood; secondly, the treatment of those materials in a manner that was determined by economics and function rather than a concern to embellish or connote luxurious refinement and thirdly, the comparative lightness and portability of the resulting designs. In my opinion, that evaluation ignores or plays down any 'traditional' elements in the work of Breuer to press home the break with tradition of the leaders of the Modern Movement.

The discussion of Keith Murray's work in the section devoted to 'Herbert Read and the International Style' situated Murray in the vanguard of British Modernism.[122] The author's citation of the 'austerely rational work of Keith Murray' conceptually linked Murray's designs for Wedgwood with furniture designed by Marcel Breuer for Isokon and radio sets for Ecko by Wells Coates, which were identified by Newman et al as embodying the principals of the (scientifically rationalist) Bauhaus methodology. [123] Yet it is clear from the examples of Murray's work selected for an illustration, (four undecorated Wedgwood pieces with precise profiles and flawless matt finish), that their terminology was derived from the aesthetic appearance of the examples cited rather than any detailed understanding of the production methods involved or knowledge of other examples of Murray's work.[124]

By the author's reckonings the 'austerely rational work of Keith Murray for Wedgwood', the 'organic' qualities of hand-thrown pots by studio potter, Bernard Leach and the modernistic styling of a tea service by Shelley Potteries were located at different points on a spectrum of

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[121] Marcel Breuer (1902 – 1981), studied and then taught furniture design at the Bauhaus between 1920 and 1928. He came to Britain in 1935 and worked in an architectural partnership with F. R. S. Yorke (1935 -1937). During that period he designed furniture and interiors for Jack Pritchard's firm, Isokon. He moved to the USA in 1937, where he took up an architectural partnership with Bauhaus founder, Walter Gropius.

[122] Murray's work was discussed and illustrated in Op.cit.. *A Survey of Design in Britain 1915 -1939*, the introduction to which aimed 'to survey the main developments of style and theory' in Britain between the wars. Introduction, p.3.

[123] Ibid. See 'Part Three: Herbert Read and the International Style', pp 27 –28.

[124] Ibid. See plate 66

approaches to non-traditional design. The distinction thus made implies that the Wedgwood designs were the product of a different and more rational design method. By contrast, the 'Foley' set is offered as an exercise in styling, an approach despised by Read and 'rationalist' Modernists. It is evident that Murray's designs are discussed because they seem to demonstrate the designer's understanding of the principles of abstract form as promulgated by Read in *Art and Industry.* Newman et al never questioned whether Murray's designs for Wedgwood were indeed any more rational than other contemporary factory-made ceramics. They equated the most advanced examples of rational design methodology of their case studies with material and symbolic qualities that constituted a machine aesthetic and in doing so they failed to tease out the complexities of the attempts of Murray and others to create 'Modern' form.[125]

Newman et al problematised other histories of the period which emphasised progressive styles at the expense of a 'more balanced view'.[126] Yet the discussion above indicates an (unintentional) agenda which did privilege the few examples of British-made artefacts inspired by the so-called 'scientific rationalism' of the Bauhaus design method over all the other artefacts included in their survey. That unwavering validation caused the Open University study to fall short of its aims. The research undertaken for this thesis, particularly which related to Murray's decorative designs and to the hand processes utilised in many of his 'machine aesthetic' products, suggests that there were many more aspects to Murray's work than a 'machine aesthetic'.

Sparke recognised a distinctly British version of Modernism in the designs of the inter war period, indeed she included Murray's work for Wedgwood amongst very few such examples. Within that small sample she identified an emphasis on styling and a lack of engagement with

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[125] A prime example is a comparative case study by Adrian Forty, of radio cabinet designs by Gordon Russell and R.D.Russell for Murphy, utilising mainly timber and plywood, and designs by Serge Chermeyeff and Wells Coates for Ecko, utilising Bakelite plastic, was cited in order to point up significant difference in the approaches of two leading British modernist designers. [125] Russell's work, according to Forty, was characterised by its '*furniture* qualities' and Wells Coates's by its '*machine* qualities'. Through such distinctions it concluded that Wells Coates' designs were the most advanced because his design methodology was closest to that of the Bauhaus. Ibid. Unit 19, p 33

[126] Ibid. Unit 19, 'Introduction', p. 6. Mysteriously, the authors imply that the study of those British examples would also explain the reasons why, (even as late as 1975, when the book was published), 'Britain had lost its leading place in design and why this had never really been regained.'

radical theoretical aspects of European Modernism. [127] She argued that the outcomes owed more to the ideas of Scandinavian design reformers and represented a 'soft, domesticated functionalist aesthetic'.[128] Sparke's perception was that, although the inter-war period had presented the opportunity for a theory of industrial design based on rational and social principles to emerge, it never fully evolved in post-war Britain. She placed part of the blame for the lack of engagement at a theoretical level at the door of contemporary British design theorists, (presumably Pevsner, Farr et al), who she argued focussed on establishing criteria for 'good design' rather than a new design methodology.[129]

Conclusion

This detailed critical analysis of the work, theory and methodology of one such designer largely confirms Sparke's thesis. In particular it recognises the complex and paradoxical nature of accounts and histories pertaining to the Modern Movement in design in pre-war Britain, in that designers such as Murray are inconsistently given heightened status as Modernists in the spirit of the Bauhaus, dependent on the position and interpretation of the writer or reviewer. Thus it aims for a more consistent analysis of Murray's design career, which does not seek to 'prove' Murray's Modernist credentials or situate him more securely in the vanguard of British Modernism

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[127] See Penny Sparke, "Great Britain: Eclecticism, Empiricism and Anti-Industrial Culture", in Carlo Pirovano (editor in chief) et al, *History of Industrial Design, Volume Three: 1919 – 1990 The Dominion of Design*, pp. 182 – 197.

[128] Ibid. p190.

[129] Sparke's argument is supported by the format of texts such as *Enquiry* and *Survey* and even *Art and Industry* which used selected illustrations of exemplary designs (and in some cases, exemplary bad designs) to communicate and foster critical awareness of 'good' Modernist design.

Chapter Two

A Historical and Contextual Account of Keith Murray's Work for the Glass making Firm, Stevens & Williams Ltd.

Introduction

In accordance with the aims of this thesis, this chapter and the one that follows establishes a contextual framework for evaluating Murray's relationship as a freelance designer with the two firms who were his principal design patrons, Stevens & Williams Ltd. of Brierley Hill near to Stourbridge[1] and Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. of Burslem, Stoke on Trent.[2] There are substantial similarities between the two firms, not least the fact that both had long-standing histories as manufacturers of exemplary products associated with the decorative arts. There are also parallels between those two branches of domestic manufacturing industries because traditional glass and pottery factories required specialist building types originated exclusively for certain processes unique to those media. In that respect, both the Black Country[3] (the Stourbridge area of the West Midlands) where Stevens & Williams was based and the Potteries (the Stoke on Trent area of Staffordshire) where Wedgwood's Etruria works was situated) were distinguishable by the highly specialised industrial architecture

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[1] Stevens & Williams changed its name to Royal Brierley Crystal in 1931 and since the Second World War, it dropped the former name from its publicity material. In the 1930s design commentators and decorative arts writers still referred to it as Stevens & Williams probably because of its long association with artistic glass going back to the nineteenth century. When design historian and curator, Lesley Jackson wrote her recent book; *20th Century Factory Glass*, Beazley (Octopus Ltd.) London, 2000, her entry for the firm was under its former name, Stevens and Williams, indicating the persistence of the firm's reputation amongst collectors and scholars. (Jackson, pp196 -198).

[2] When Murray first worked for Wedgwood in the early 1930s, the firm was located at the Etruria Works in Burslem. By 1940 it had transferred half of its production to its present headquarters at Barlaston, outside of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs.

[3] That name refers to the environmental impact of heavy industry, especially mining and metalworking in the area. It was one of the first regional areas to experience the type of integrated industrialisation and urbanisation associated with the early phase of the Industrial Revolution in Britain.

associated with their indigenous manufacturing industries.[4] Alongside the accumulation of specialist factories in those areas was the human equivalent in terms of an accumulation of highly specialised skills. Thus, by the twentieth century both industries had distinctive traditions attached to their localities and populations, to individual factories and to the goods that they produced. Both firms had invested in some plant and machinery for speeding up hand processes by the 1930s but differed in their individual commitment to the more radical adoption of modern systematised processes. Thus it is important to establish and analyse how those different outlooks affected Murray's relationship with the individual firms.

This chapter examines Murray's working relationship as a freelance designer of glass with Stevens & Williams. The first part sets out the state of the glass industry in the inter-war years when Murray worked as a designer of glass. It explains the origins of the specialist lead crystal sector in which Murray worked and considers the problems of modernising that industry (especially in terms of mechanised production methods) that was faced by the industry sector, the individual firm and the designer in the period before the Second World War. The second part is a detailed account of Murray's working relationship with the firm and the final part sets out the range of designs which Murray made for the firm with particular reference to the methods employed in their manufacture.[5]

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[4] Typical sights in the Black Country were the glass cones that housed the furnace and glass blowing area. The Potteries were distinguished by brick built bottle ovens where the pots were fired. The nineteenth century factory site usually included smaller workshop buildings dedicated to specific processes of manufacture and storage.

[5] Technical terms and some definitions associated with glass and glass making are explained in footnotes as they appear in this text. It also reproduces aspects of the received understanding concerning the history of British glass making or the history of specific firms. Whilst I have not always referred to a specific source in the case of both historical data and terminology, I have checked my understanding against standard studies of glass and glass history. The following publications were particularly relevant :

- David Battie and Simon Cottle (eds), *Sotherby's Concise Encyclopaedia of Glass,* Conran Octopus, 1991.
- Roger Dodsworth (ed) op. cit. *British Glass between the Wars*
- Lesley Jackson, op.cit. *20th Century Factory Glass*
- Dan Klein and Ward Lloyd (eds), *The History of Glass,* Orbis, 1984
- Ada Polak, *Glass, Its Makers and Its Public*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975

Part One: Traditional lead (crystal) glass manufacture in Britain and the state of that sector of the British glass industry in the 1930s.

Glass and the Modern Movement

Murray's tentative experiments in glass design occurred at a time when there was heightened interest in glass and glass design especially in Modernist circles.[6] The technical advance of the industry had made available a range of new materials including plate glass, glass bricks and heat-resistant glass and new products such as the electric light bulb, industrial lamps and ovenproof cooking ware. The excitement of these new materials created an interest in modernising traditional glass making on the Continent of Europe, in Scandinavia and in America.[7] This is exemplified in Guillame Janneau's *Modern Glass,* an illustrated survey of innovatory designs from an international selection of glass making countries which was first published in Britain.[8]

One British glass manufacturers who had a reputation for good design in the inter-war period was James Powell and Sons (Whitefriars Glass Ltd.), one of the very few London-based glass houses still in operation in the twentieth

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o W. E. S. Turner, 'Twenty-one Years: A Professor Looks Out on the Glass Industry' (parts II and III), *Journal of The Society of Glass Technology,* vol XXII, 1938, pp 105 – 142.
o Geoffrey Wills, *The Country Life Collector's Pocket Book of Glass,* Hamlyn, 1966, (this revised edition 1979).

[6] Glass played a major role in the Modern Movement in architecture and design, both materially and philosophically. Along with concrete and steel it was the basis of the International Style of architecture as epitomised by the villas of the inter-war period designed by the French architect, Le Corbusier. The combination of glass and chromed tubular steel is to be found in some of the most radical designs for furniture, lighting and home accessories emanating from the Dessau Bauhaus in Germany and the ateliers of Le Corbusier and Eileen Gray. Of all three materials, glass was at the symbolic heart of the Modern Movement; it was paradoxically hailed as a new material, marvellously produced by the mile in modern factories but also revered for its metaphysical crystalline associations in Expressionist architecture in Germany. The building which best symbolises this mystical reverence for glass is Bruno Taut's *Glass Pavilion* at the Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Cologne, 1914.

[7] The was exemplified by the special interest taken by commentators in the designs for everyday table glass manufactured by the Swedish firm, Orrefors, displayed at the *Exposition Internationale Des Arts Industriels et Décoratifs Modernes,* Paris 1925, and in subsequent exhibitions that featured Swedish glass.

[8] Guillame Janneau, *Modern Glass,* Country Life, 1931. (I was shown a first edition copy of this book in the 1980s that had Keith Murray's signature on the frontispiece and was possibly owned by him.)

century.[9] Powells's was the only old-established British glass factory to have any credibility with design reformers and Modernists in the early twentieth century because it remained true to Arts & Crafts principles of simplicity of form, beauty of material and excellence of craftsmanship.[10] The firm's work was singled out amongst British glass firms by Janneau as '...more nearly related to that of the Continental artists and less specifically British.' He admired particularly the way that the designer '...allows the outline of the glass to retain all its clean simplicity...'[11] Not surprisingly, given its location near to London and its reputation for good design, when Murray made his first designs in glass, he approached Powell's as a potential manufacturer. (See Part 2, below for details).[12] However, it is likely that when Murray first conceived the idea of designing Modern table glass he had not appreciated the extent to which the more traditional side of the British glass industry was resistant to change and to modernisation in general.

The tradition of lead glass making in Britain

That tradition dated back to the late 17th century when 'glass of lead' or 'flint glass' was invented by an English glass maker, George Ravenscroft, (1618 -

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[9] The firm moved outside of London to a modern factory in Wealdon in 1924. It closed down in 1980.

[10] The firm has a unique history amongst English firms in that its founder, James Powell and his son Harry were influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement and had established a reputation for stained window designs. It specialised in artistic, hand-blown glass and became well known for its simple, hand-made domestic glass from the second half of the 19th century. Powell's manufactured a set of table glass designed by the Arts and Crafts architect, Philip Webb for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company. It specialised in simple and elegant hand made pieces, often inspired by traditional Venetian glasshouse techniques. In the early twentieth century it also revived antiquarian styles including Roman and Mediaeval German styles of vessel making, inspired by an interest in glass archaeology.

[11] Guillame Janneau, op.cit p 15.

[12] Murray's own account suggests that his designs were not considered to be suited to the hand-making methods at Whitefriars and he was consequently directed towards firms which were quantity producers of glass. It would however, be a false assumption to claim that Stevens & Williams who manufactured his designs, utilised substantially different methods to Powell's, as my discussion of production facilities at the firm, and in the glass industry generally will show. K. Murray, op cit. 'The Design of Table Glass', pp 53 – 56.

1681). The chief aesthetic quality of this new metal was its clarity and purity. [13] It enabled British glassmakers to produce a new product, a white (that is colourless), heavy glassware for the table, which was more substantial and durable than the highly prized *façon de Venise* glassware.[14] The clear, white metal was produced by adding lead to the mix in the place of the conventional flux materials, potash or soda.[15] Manufacture of 'lead crystal' (its popular name) was an organised affair and therefore suited to factory rather than artisanal production methods.[16] The thick (and softer) walls of vessels made of 'lead crystal' (its popular name) were suited to fairly deep cutting on an abrasive wheel and to a lighter form of engraving using a small copper-wheel.[17] That style of glass making and decorating (especially when drawing upon neo-classical forms and ornament) became the tradition in Britain and Ireland for lead crystal manufacture and by the nineteenth century was exported and

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[13] Metal is the term used to distinguish the qualities of the material from the object made of glass (e.g table glass). Metal denotes glass as a material in both the sense of a molten 'mix' from which glass objects are made and the material quality of the glass in a finished object (e.g. blemishless, brilliant etc).

[14] *Façon de Venise* is the generic name for fine glass made in the Venetian manner in European glass houses during the 16th and 17th centuries. It was used to distinguish a sophisticated product from its cruder vernacular counterparts (especially 'forest' or 'Waldglas').

[15] Lead is used in large quantities (24% - 30%) as a flux (always an alkaline substance) to give the metal plasticity in its molten state and translucency and hardness in its cooled or annealed state. The metal for leaded glass is molten at lower temperatures than for Venetian glass made with a flux of soda rather than lead. The slow moving molten metal is therefore less malleable than soda glass and so lends itself to more massive forms. When the thicker lead metal cools and is annealed the resulting pieces are thick-walled and less brittle than the finer Venetian wares and are thus suited to cutting and engraving.

[16] Lead glass making was a highly organised series of processes involving hierarchical teams of skilled workers. Production was organised around and determined by the melting and working out of a batch of raw materials in the glass house furnace. The 'gaffer' was the most highly skilled (and usually the most experienced worker) in the glass house team. Below him were servers and general helpers (usually trainees). Wheel cutting and copper-wheel engraving, which became the principal modes of decorating English lead crystal from the eighteenth century, were undertaken in decorating workshops by skilled craftsmen and their assistants after the vessel was formed and annealed. The division between forming processes and decorating and finishing processes made it highly suited to the factory method of production. Expansion of small firms could be managed by increasing the number of pots of molten glass (metal) in the glass house and the number of teams working the pots. Similarly adding extra wheels and workers could expand the decorating and finishing workshops.

[17] Huguenot glass makers settled in the Stourbridge area in the late seventeenth century bringing with them glass making skills and Continental styles of wheel cutting and engraving.

frequently imitated throughout the world.[18] It was associated with high class domestic drinking glass, ornaments, lighting and, from the mid–nineteenth century, artistic items for the home such as highly decorated bowls, vases and table ornaments. It was those traditions to which Stourbridge manufacturers in particular were profoundly wedded as Murray was to find when he worked for Stevens & Williams in the 1930s.

The depressed market for items of all kinds but particularly luxury glass in the 1930s forced firms in the traditional sector to experiment with new approaches to design, either by employing designers from abroad, commissioning freelance artists and designers or encouraging the development of 'modern' ranges.[19] The Stourbridge area, where lead crystal had become the main output, was marked by conservatism and parochialism with respect to design and designers so the investment in new design was a radical departure for this most traditional sector of British glass manufacturing. However, although that was the case in the inter-war years it had not always been so because in the 19th century the leading firms in the area, Stevens & Williams and Thomas Webb, enjoyed international reputations for innovative art glass.[20] Sadly, artistic innovation was not maintained and by the turn of the twentieth century glass designers such as Emile Gallé and later René Lalique in France and Louis Comfort

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[18] Lead crystal from Britain and Ireland was often referred to in the past as 'English Glass' because the composition, manufacturing methods and styles were initially developed in glass houses in England in the eighteenth century. It is often referred to by collectors and decorative art specialists as 'Georgian glass' to denote its eighteenth century British provenance.

[19] Many of these modern experiments were commemorated in the exhibition and catalogue *British Glass between the Wars*. Significantly, the exhibition and catalogue, which was mainly concerned with innovative commercially-made glass c.1919 -1939, contained a small section titled 'Victorian Survival', which showed that a number of firms at the quality end of the market were still producing designs dating back to the Victorian and Edwardian eras even as late as the 1930s. Roger Dodsworth (ed.) op. cit. *British Glass between the Wars,* pp 48 – 52.

[20] In the second half of the 19th century, glass making and decorating skills were so developed in the Stourbridge area that a whole profusion of colourings, casings and ornamentation was employed in the making of 'Art Glass', a new category of finely decorated ornamental glass, which was exported world wide. Richly coloured cased ornamental pieces were decorated using a broad range of techniques from cameo cutting of a superb quality to coloured enamel painting that made Stourbridge world famous for its artistry in glass. The skills tradition associated with Art Glass was sustained in those 'traditional' glass factories such as Stevens & Williams and Thomas Webb, into the early twentieth century, although artistic innovation was not. See Charles Hajdamach, *British glass, 1800 – 1914,* Antique Collectors Club, Woodbridge, 1991.

Tiffany in America, took the artistic lead.[21] An indication of the backwardness of British glass design was the retention well into the 1920s of stylistics associated with French Art Nouveau glass design long after the style had waned on the Continent.[22] A tradition of lack of investment in new methods was accentuated by the depressed conditions which prevailed in the inter-war period.

Cut lead crystal in the Stourbridge area

Alongside the production of the prestigious art glass, Stevens &Williams' principal product was high quality cut and engraved white lead crystal tableware. The Victorian taste in cut glass was for brilliance, which demanded that the greater proportion of the surface be decorated with small, shallow, prismatic cuts. Stourbridge firms increasingly specialised in this style of cutting which was considered over-elaborate by those such as Murray who believed that the classically-inspired massive forms of the 18th and early 19th centuries, decorated with broad flutes and deep prismatic cutting typical of English and Irish lead crystal, represented a high point in good design.[23] The survival of and indeed specialisation in shallow prismatic cutting techniques and florid styles of engraving aligned with the conservative tastes of its buying public resulted in

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[21] They originated an ornamental style of glass, characterised by organic lines, stylised decoration and frequently, metallic finishes and effects in the metal, now known as Art Nouveau. The name came from the innovative Parisian department store owned by the connoisseur and patron, Siegfried Bing who recognised the commercial as well as the aesthetic potential of art ware. Despite its artistic nature Art Nouveau glass was generally factory made and applied to a large range of artefacts which could include one-off pieces or small runs of lamps and sculptural pieces to larger runs of ornamental items such as vases, bowls and perfume bottles. Commercial glass factories especially associated with Art Nouveau glass were Duam, Muller Frères and Lalique.

[22] Stevens and Williams displayed a wine glass styled as a water lily, (a favourite Art Nouveau motif) at the *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, Paris 1925. Illustrated in *Reports on the Present Position and Tendencies in the Industrial Arts as Indicated by the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, Paris 1925.*

[23] Murray defined 'Old English glass' of which he was a profound admirer, as that made before 1850, when more massive forms and simpler cutting styles were the prevailing taste. See Keith Murray, op.cit. 'The Design of Table Glass', p 53

an industry that was out of touch with developments in design, especially in other glass making countries.

The partial modernisation of the 'traditional' sector of the British glass industry.

It is important to recognise that glass making firms associated with the Stourbridge industry, whilst not in the same category as glassmakers in the Arts & Crafts tradition such as Powell's, had generally resisted the impulse towards large scale mechanisation of production methods or towards catering for the mass market's demand for cheaper domestic glass in the late nineteenth century. The first major mass production method to affect domestic glassmaking (as opposed to the mass production of window glass and bottles) was press-moulding, an American innovation which had enabled decorated glassware to expand from being an exclusive status symbol to being a commonplace product for a genuine mass market.[24] It was not generally taken up by Stourbridge manufacturers because craft practices were an influential factor in determining the uptake of mechanised methods in that region. [25]

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the rapid industrialisation of several sectors of British glass manufacture when production of plate and mirror glass, light bulbs and containers and drinking glass for the food and

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[24] The technique for pressing glass was developed in America in the 1820s and enabled objects to be made and decorated in a single operation. Pressed glass manufacture therefore did not require the same level of hand skills or artistry as hand or mould-blown cut and engraved crystal.

[25] By the early twentieth century the major concentration of traditional glass making in England was in the West Midlands and the North East as both regions had long traditions of glass making dating back to the sixteenth century. However lead crystal remained the staple product of the Stourbridge area whilst cheaper pressed glass (including heat resistant ware) was mainly produced on Tyneside. Thus the change in the latter's case was towards making products for mass markets. See John C. Baker's concise account of changes affecting production in the North East region, 'James A. Jobling & Co. Ltd. subsequently Corning Ltd., manufacturer of Pyrex glassware,' in *Pyrex: 60 Years of Design,* (exhibition catalogue), Tyne & Wear County Council Museums, April 1983, pp 6 – 12.

beverages industry became fully mechanised.[26] Technical modernisation associated with mass production methods reduced the price of many glass products so that they became affordable to the mass of the population. Where at the outset the nineteenth century glass fenestration and glass tableware had been the province of the very wealthy, well before it ended windowpanes, bottles, utilitarian drinking glasses and fancy glass became universal in all classes of households.

Despite the ubiquity of mass-produced glass in the second half of the nineteenth century the growing middle class market still aspired to owning and using expensive domestic glassware produced by craftsmen.[27] 'Quality' in the prevailing bourgeois terms of the nineteenth century implied artistic and elitist traditions (despite the efforts of the Arts & Crafts Movement to introduce new criteria such as simplicity and usefulness). The large lead crystal table sets and ornaments made fashionable in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries epitomised the domestic splendour associated with upper class 'English' lifestyles. Stourbridge manufacturers were committed to such notions of

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[26] Modern automated manufacture required little skilled labour so new factories could be located according to other criteria leaving many skilled glass makers out of work in former glass making regions. For example, the bottle - making industry was traditionally located in the West Riding of Yorkshire, Lancashire, London and Scotland. That sector of the industry could not resist the drive for standardisation of containers and the general lowering of unit costs that automated production facilitated so it was forced to automate after the First World War and traditional bottle making in the Yorkshire region disappeared as a consequence. Two of the major mass producers of glass products were Pilkington's who specialised in plate glass products and United Glass Bottle Manufacturers, Ltd. who made tumblers and containers. Both firms, situated in Saint Helen's, Lancashire, (now Merseyside), were committed to automated mass production. See W. E. S. Turner, op.cit. 'Twenty-one Years: A Professor Looks Out on the Glass Industry', pp 105 – 142

In between the two extremes of advanced technology and mass production on the one hand and high quality hand-made products on the other, there were factories who were geared to bulk production either by speeding up hand processes or by mechanising some or all of their production. Some established firms diversified into new glass products especially scientific glass and heat-resistant glass, which was mass-produced and machine-pressed. Jobling and Co. had bought the rights to manufacture *Pyrex* heat-resistant glass from the American company, Corning Glass Works in 1921. A British version, *Orlak*, was made by the Birmingham firm, Chance Brothers between 1929 and 1933 and then taken over by Jobling. The British Heat Resistant Glass Co. continued to make a domestic heat-resistant range, *Phoenix*, in Birmingham. See Kathryn Ross. 'Pressed Glass' in Roger Dodsworth (ed) op. cit. *British Glass between the Wars,* pp 35 – 37.

[27] See W. Hamish Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market 1850 – 1914,* Macmillan, 1981

'quality' production and did not want to see their prestigious staple product undercut by cheap imitations so press moulding was not generally taken up in the Stourbridge area.[28] They also had a vested interest in exploiting the reservoir of traditional skills of making and decorating glass that existed in the locality. Thus the survival of the traditional handicraft sector of the British glass industry was ensured into the twentieth century by long established firms such as Stevens & Williams.[29]

Although there was reluctance to modernise production along mass production lines, firms such as Stevens & Williams did employ some mechanised processes and / or moulding techniques in order to increase and speed up the production of what were still essentially hand made products. For example, there were various mechanised processes for breaking off and finishing the wares that facilitated bulk production of some lines.[30] A combination of mechanised finishing methods to speed up manufacture and the use of a cheaper metal (probably soda rather than lead glass) to lessen the cost were employed for contract work at Stevens and Williams.[31] The prestigious Stevens &

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[28] That was not the case for other traditional glass making regions, especially the North East where firms such as Jobling and Co., George Davidson and Bagley and Co. had invested in machinery for press-moulding wares in the second half of the nineteenth century. They made cheaper pressed tableware and home accessories some of which imitated traditional cut crystal. John Baker, op. cit. *Pyrex...*

[29] The firm's attachment to making traditional lead crystal products can be seen in its adoption of the name 'Royal Brierley Crystal' in place of the well-known and respected trade name, Stevens & Williams Ltd. and of the new brand name 'Royal Brierley' in the 1930s. It was clearly the traditions of cut and engraved lead crystal associated with Stourbridge glassmaking (as well as the prestige of Royal patronage) with which the firm wanted to align its products.

[30] See Ada Polak, op.cit. *Glass, Its Makers and Its Public*, pp 170 – 171 for details of 'streamlining of traditional methods' in glass factories during the late 19th and early 20th century.

[31] The firm had an important contracts division at the Brierley Hill works making drinking glasses in large runs for the Ministry of Works, South African Railways, Canadian Pacific Railways, the Cunard Company and various hotels. This was recounted to me by Sam Thompson, Former Works Manager, who became the curator of the Stevens & Williams' Museum after his retirement. Thompson's recollections are especially valuable because he was working at the firm in the 1930s and remembered many details about the production of Murray's modern lines. Thompson did not like to take part in formal interviews but was very helpful to me in showing archival material related to Murray's designs and explaining and interpreting details, many specific questions relating to Murray's employment by the firm and about the organisation of the factory during the inter-war period.

Williams (and later Royal Brierley) manufacturing symbol operated as a guarantee of quality and an intimation of exclusivity for corporate clients and their public. [32] Contract work improved turnover at the factory without generally expanding the size of the skilled sector of the workforce or threatening the exclusive status of its hand made lines.[33] That type of bulk production for contracted clients represented a halfway stage between traditional hand-making and finishing and fully mechanised mass production. In firms such as Stevens & Williams who were committed to high quality hand methods and traditional designs, it did not however, represent a transitional or interim stage between those two methods.

Bulk production and mass production in the British glass industry

Throughout this chapter distinctions have been made between bulk production in traditional and semi-modernised glass factories and mass production in fully modernised (i.e. twentieth century) glass plants. 'Bulk production', in this thesis refers to large but usually discontinuous production runs producing a standardised item where there are some advantageous economies of scale gained. Bulk production can apply to handicraft processes, machine processes

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Although Thompson played a major part in informing my understanding of Murray's working relationship with the firm, much of the discussion I had with him during my visits to the firm between 1983 and 1986 was not recorded in a formal way. This has been remedied in part by Roger Dodsworth of the Broadfield House Glass Museum who had several conversations with the very elderly Mr Thompson over the summer of 2001concerning items from the former Stevens and Williams archive that are now held by the museum. A summary of those conversations relating specifically to the Keith Murray glass in the form of file notes is included in the appendices of this thesis. (See Appendix III : Roger Dodsworth, 'Notes of Conversations with Sam Thompson regarding Keith Murray Pattern Book'), July/ August 2001.

[32] Commercial and institutional customers often had their own designs customised with a company monogram or logo. The firm kept a separate design book of monograms and logos.

[33] Sam Thompson recalled a major contract of a million and half tumblers for South African Railways during the 1930s, although it is not clear whether that quantity was produced over a number of years. Supplying drinking glasses for hotels would most likely have involved much smaller runs and frequent replacements. Not surprisingly, it was also the side of production where women were most frequently employed.

or processes combining them both.[34] Aside from its sizeable contract division at the original Brierley Hill glassworks, Stevens & Williams had acquired a factory at Tipton, a couple of miles away, where lampshades and cheaper table glass, especially for the contract markets were made in bulk.[35] Such diversification, that is making other types of products in separate factories, was an established way of expanding and diversifying production in traditional glass firms in the inter-war period. For example, in the 1930s Thomas Webb and Sons, who, like Stevens & Williams catered for the top end of the lead crystal market, used specially purchased German cutting machines at their Stourbridge factory to decorate tumblers mass-produced by automatic machinery at its sister-firm, Dema Glass of Chesterfield.[36]

There were evident overlaps in terms of organisation and outcomes between bulk production and mass production. In the context of this thesis mass production implies the large scale and usually continuous production of single products (for example glass containers for the commercial food industry), utilising mechanised methods of production in specially designed plants.[37] The

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[34] Economic benefits are gained through some or all of the following: (i) speeding up of hand processes, (ii) reducing labour costs by employing some mechanised or technology-assisted processes (e.g. mould blowing) in place of hand ones, (iii) replacing all or part of the skilled labour workforce with semi-skilled labour (iv) utilising materials and processes to greater efficiency (v) organising production to maximise efficient and flexible use of labour, equipment and space in the factory setting. That analysis of bulk methods is not restricted to glass making. It applies equally to the context of pottery manufacture as we shall see in Chapter Three.

[35] Even in 1985 it was still possible to discern a style of large-scale bulk production that had probably changed little from before the 1930s. The main method of production observed at the Tipton factory was mould blowing, still a hand technique but quicker than free-blowing and not requiring the same levels of skill and artistry as free blowing. The finishing of the lampshades was mainly mechanised utilising semi-skilled and even low-skilled operatives in the various systematised processes.

[36] See former Technical and Works Director, Stan Eveson's account of this period of Thos. Webb's history in Dodsworth, R. (ed), *British Glass Between the Wars*, Exhibition Catalogue, Dudley Leisure Services, 1987, pp 24 - 28.

[37] The principal methods for mass producing glass before the Second World War were floating (for the manufacture of sheet glass) and blow-moulding (for bottles and drinking glass). Both were fully automated techniques and required substantial investment in plant and machinery. Such plants were organised along Fordist lines; i.e. into a series of processes starting with raw materials and moving through mechanised stages of production, finishing, packing and distribution. See the excellent account of the modernisation of the international glass industry written in the inter-war years, in Turner, op.cit. 'Twenty-one Years: A Professor Looks Out on the Glass Industry', pp 105 – 142.

main economic benefits of modern mass production relate to even greater economies of scale and efficiency of production. Modern mass production rarely demands skilled handicraft labour or knowledge of those processes. Human input in such systems is likely to be in the form of a hierarchy of technical experts and managers supported by a larger team of skilled and semi-skilled machine operators and packers. An important aim of this method is that of ensuring uniformity of products and standard of finish. These requirements have become increasingly essential in the glass industry to fulfil modern demands for technical consistency and exactitude. For example, bottles for the drinks industry have to fit filling machines and take an exact amount of liquid and window glass, especially vehicle windscreens has to be flawless and an exact size for assembly purposes. A certain degree of uniformity and consistency is also a requirement for bulk production, where standardised products are required.[38] Those technical considerations may have accelerated the uptake of modern methods in older sectors of the glass industry.[39]

The Stourbridge industry was dominated by limited capital family-based businesses characterised by a conservative style of management which lacked incentives to invest in technology. Stevens & Williams, which in the nineteenth century had established a 'niche' market for high cost, luxury items and

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[38] Adrian Forty has argued that 'the need for a consistent product' was the prime motivation for the design of Josiah Wedgwood's Etruria factory in the late 18th century in order to facilitate systematised production methods. Adrian Forty, op.cit. *Objects of Desire,* pp. 29 – 41. The difference between Wedgwood's ambitions and the requirements of modern manufacturers is one of both degree and application. Wedgwood demanded a consistently uniform (with regards to material and aesthetic qualities) product for the purpose of selling goods from sample designs rather than from stock. Modern manufactures frequently require a high level of both consistency (of material quality) and exactitude (of dimensions) especially when that product is a component in another industrial or technical process, for example, a commercial container or a vehicle windscreen.

[39] At least one of the country's largest manufacturers of mass-produced container glass (United Bottle) did develop out of a traditional glass-making factory. The firm's factory at Saint Helen's had formerly been a family owned glassworks making bottles by traditional method. The old site, the Sherdely Works, was modernised for automated production when it became part of the large United Bottle group. Turner, op.cit. 'Twenty-one Years: A Professor Looks Out on the Glass Industry', pp 105 – 142

products was typical of such firms.[40] Although it had invested in some machinery and adopted some methods to speed up bulk production of cheaper contract lines, it remained committed to the luxury end of the market in the twentieth century. To do otherwise would have meant competing in a sector that was generally undercut by low-priced imports. A major problem with that scheme was that since the turn of the century, Stourbridge glass was conservative in style and character.

Reform discourse within the British Glass Industry in the inter-war period

There was considerable pressure to reform the design of British glass from outside of the industry, especially from interested groups such as the Design Industries Association and the Society of Artists and Designers. These were discussed in detail in the section on design reform, (see Chapter One). There is further primary source evidence of the development of a significant discourse about modernising the industry and its products from bodies and individuals with close ties to the glass industry as detailed below. One important body in respect of its advocating of more scientific approaches to glass making, was the Society of Glass Technologists, founded in 1916 by Professor W. E. S. Turner.[41] Turner saw the need for a more rigorous scientific approach to glass manufacture, whether on an industrial scale or for traditional manufacture.[42]

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[40] Stevens & Williams had been under family ownership since its founding in 1819 as Silvers, Mills & Stevens. The Williams family entered the firm through marriage when, from 1847, it became Stevens & Williams. It changed its name to Royal Brierley Crystal in 1931. At that time it employed approximately 380 people. The factory, which it operated until the closure of the family firm in 1998, was built in 1870. The former factory on the original Moor Lane site was used in the twentieth century as the firm's museum. The size of its workforce indicates that it was one of the larger factories in the area but it was nonetheless in the small to medium size for a manufacturing business. (Jackson cites its main competitors Thomas Webb, as employing 312 people in 1920 and Stuart's, as employing 400 in 1950). See Lesley Jackson, op.cit. *20th Century Factory Glass,* pp. 196 – 198.

[41] Turner was a chemist, who had established the world-famous Department of Glass Technology at Sheffield University in 1915.

[42] The research programme of the Society was formulated on Turner's insistence that it should investigate problems in materials and production in all sectors of the industry.

Alongside his technological interests Turner also studied, collected and lectured on ancient and modern glass art.[43] His respect for the art of glass making created a climate of exchange in the more traditional sector of the industry, both through personal contact and through its publication: *Journal of the Society of Glass Technology*, published from 1917. This is evidenced by the fact that two of its founder members were both directors of traditional family-owned glass houses.[44] The inclusion and involvement of representatives of that small and more traditional sector of the industry is indicative of the broad basis of the Society and its willingness to include traditional manufacturing in its programme. To underline the inclusive ethos of the Society (and possibly his personal commitment to put that into effect), Turner arranged regular joint conventions from 1928 onwards with the Glass Manufacturers' Federation, of which Williams-Thomas and Powell were leading members.

Through such positive efforts, which developed the Society's link with industry, it fostered a more modern, scientific approach to manufacture. However, most of the benefits of this approach were in terms of chemical improvement to materials and mixes and a supporting technical understanding of processes. The Society did however, put the role of design on its agenda for debate and discussion as evidenced in the publication in its journal in 1934 of two papers: 'A Dissertation on Glass Container Design' and 'The Design of Glass Bottles' written by two of its members who were themselves involved in specialist design of mass produced commercial glass products.[45] In that year, following its AGM, the Society announced through its report in *PGGTR*, its intentions to:

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[43] For a fuller account of the life and achievements of this remarkable man see Douglas, R W, 'William Ernest Stephen Turner', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol. 10, November 1964, pp 324 - 355.

[44] Hubert Williams-Thomas, Managing Director of Stevens & Williams and Harry Powell of Whitefrairs' were Vice- presidents of its Council. Turner, op.cit. 'Twenty-one Years: A Professor Looks Out on the Glass Industry', (part I) pp 99 - 105

[45] See Graham, K.L, 'A Dissertation on Glass Container Design', *Journal of the Society of Glass Technology*, Vol. XVII, 1934, pp 112 - 121, and Meigh, E., 'The Design of Glass Bottles', ibid. pp 122 - 127.

> '...stimulate the artistic side of the glass industry... by encouraging ...British Glass manufacturers to contribute something worthy to the Exhibition of Industrial Art... [organised by the Royal Society of Arts and to be held the following year]. '[46]

It arranged an industry symposium: *Form, Design and Decoration of Glass,* at the V& A Museum with an opening address and key note speech delivered by Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith who had served on the Gorrell Committee on Art and Industry.[47]

The importance of improving glass design and strengthening the role of the glass designer was raised within the industry itself in the mid 1920s at a time of increasing economic depression in Britain.[48] Marriot Powell, glass designer and company director of Whitefriars, played a major part in instigating this discourse. He used his position as officially appointed commentator on the glass exhibits at the Paris Exhibition, 1925 to bemoan the lack of official support needed to instigate and promote innovation in British glass design.[49] He argued that the backwardness of British glass design compared to that of other countries, especially Sweden could partly be remedied by official investment in design. However, although he was making a special case for support for the glass industry most of the staple industries in Britain were suffering as a result

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[46] See 'Society of Glass Technology AGM', *PGGTR,* May 2, 1934, pp.589 -6.

[47] The Symposium was reported with speeches in full and post-presentation discussion in *PGGTR.* See 'Form, Design and Decoration of Glass', *PGGTR,* July 2, 1934, pp.832 -839.

[48] It is important to recognise the economic recession that beset sectors of British industry (especially heavy industry) in the 1920s (that is before the onset of the Great Depression of 1929 – 1932) . Economic recovery in Britain after the First World War was already declining by 1921. Unemployment figures were high throughout the1920s, with figures reaching over a million. The Wall Street Crash of 1929, which triggered the Great Depression, made the conditions even worse. A more detailed analysis of the economic problems besetting the country in the 1920s and early 1930s was set out in the Macmillan Report of 1929-1931. For a concise analytical account of the Macmillan committee on finance and Industry by see John Ramsden (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth –Century British Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.416.

[49] Marriot Powell op cit. *Reports...Paris 1925,* pp 48 –52

of competition from other countries (and the underlying cause was economic).[50]

In 1933 his fellow director, James Hogan expanded the discourse on design to mass-produced glass in a lecture on 'The Design and Form of Glassware' at the Royal Society of Arts.[51] In it he called for the employment of artists and designers to create good modern forms for mass-produced glass and argued for a more restrained approach to decoration in the industry as a whole. In 1935 Keith Murray contributed to the industry's internal debate about modernising design and production when his critical observation of the glass industry written from the perspective as freelance designer, was published.[52] In his work for Stevens & Williams, Murray confronted the problems associated with modernising (which usually meant simplifying) designs for lead glass. In terms of modern aesthetics he had a reasonable degree of success in meeting his aims. However, he was a committed Modernist and was not satisfied with the superficial uptake of contemporary styles as a substitute for the embrace of Modernist ideas about design and production of domestic glass.

Murray's critique of the glass industry had its counterpart in the industry's own critical perspective on the issue of design reform which appears in the primary evidence as a fragmented discourse. It largely takes the form of editorial comment in the leading trade journal, *Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review*[53] *(*hereafter *PGGTR)* and published response to the type of lectures and

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[50] A key factor was Britain's return to the Gold Standard at pre-war levels, making British goods expensive in world markets and most foreign goods inexpensive as imports. See John Ramsden (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth –Century British Politics*, p. 271

[51] His audience included glass manufacturers, representatives from the Society of Glass Technology and educationalists associated with the glass industry. See Hogan, J. 'The Design and Form of Glassware', *Pottery Gazette and Glass Trades Review*, March 1st 1933, pp 343 - 347.

[52] The paper was first delivered as a lecture to the Society. See Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer', *Transactions of the Society of Glass Technology*, Vol. 19, pp. 10 –17.

[53] *Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review* is now known as *Tableware International.*

papers advocating design reform discussed above.[54] In the case of the latter, there was often an opportunity for industry representatives to join in the debate after the delivery of a speech such as that by James Hogan as evidenced by the inclusion in the published account of the discussion that followed.[55] The consensus, implicit in the assertions made in such circumstance and often by directors of family-run glass factories was that the more radical aspects of the design reform movement were wilfully ignorant of the actualities of commercial production and entirely dismissive of the tastes of its market sector, which desired traditional products and styles.[56] Such polarisations of viewpoints (in the context of historical accounts that were biased towards the design reform viewpoint) demand a closer and more detailed understanding of the imperatives that drove the 'traditional' sector of the glass industry at the time that Murray worked within it. For that reason, the economic state of the glass industry in the 1930s is examined below in order to evaluate the specific concerns that

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[54] Perusal of typical content for the period c.1928 – 1939 of *PGGTR*, which was also the leading trade journal for the British pottery industry, shows evidence of a parallel discourse pertaining to ceramics industry. One example of editorial commentary in response to a lecture given to the Society of Industrial Artists by John de La Vallette, 'Modern Conditions and Contemporary Design',(published in PGGTR, April 2, 1934, pp 485 – 495), is indicative of the defensive attitude of industry spokesmen when faced with what was perceived to be critical comment from outside bodies. In the same issue the leader editorial stated: 'Art is becoming British again and there is little doubt that the public is turning from Continental monstrosities to the more homely type of art that breathes the British spirit. ... This does not mean a return to the Victorian era; it just means that the British nature does not take kindly to hard outlines; there can be simplicity in art without ugliness.... Industrial art must cater to the non-fastidious millions who have aptly been called the "no-brows"; those who have plenty of commonsense but no fads.' Ibid. p.435.

[55] For example, see James Hogan, op. cit. 'The Design and Form of Glassware'. Significantly, this was published in full, complete with abstract and post-lecture discussion in the leading trade journal.

[56] The published account of the discussion following James Hogan's paper: 'Artistic Table Glass' delivered at the Glass Technology symposium 'Form, Design and Decoration of Glass' (op.cit) included comments by Hubert Williams-Thomas, managing Director of Stevens &Williams responding to suggestions made about poor design in British lead crystal glass. This discussion was instructive because Hogan (himself a glass maker and Director of the famous Whitefriar's glass) fundamentally questioned the relevance of lead crystal for modern glass production. He went so far in his paper as to challenge manufacturers of lead crystal to imagine what type and design of glass they would produce if the materials for making lead crystal were not available. In that context, Williams-Thomas's response (as a manufacturer whose production was almost entirely lead crystal) was bound to be defensive, even though his employment of Keith Murray and the subsequent introduction of new 'modern' styles showed that his attitude was far from conservative.

manufacturers such as Stevens & Williams were encountering in their commercial operations just before and during the time that Murray was working for the firm.

The Economic State of the British Glass Industry in the 1930s

Economic evidence demonstrates that the most over-arching problem affecting the British lead crystal industry (and British manufacturing in general) in the 1930s was the world recession following the Wall Street Crash,[57] which had a disastrous effect on export sales of glass, (see Graph 1).[58] The graph represents the total yearly values for export sales of British glass between 1927 and 1939. It confirms the impact of the worsening recession after 1929 on export sales of glass from an earlier high of approximately two and a half million pounds in 1926. The steep decline on the graph to a low of approximately one and a quarter million pounds in 1932 represents a drop in total value by 50%. It shows that the nadir of the depression for the British glass industry was between 1932 and 1933, after which there was a gradual year-on-year recovery in export sales up to1937. After that date the graph indicates the onset of a further decline in which reflected the destabilising effect of international tensions in Europe and the Far East.

Traditional lead crystal products were doubly disadvantaged during the economically depressed years of the 1930s because the relatively high material and labour costs associated with their manufacture made them more expensive than other types of domestic glass.[59] Competition at the lower end of the market

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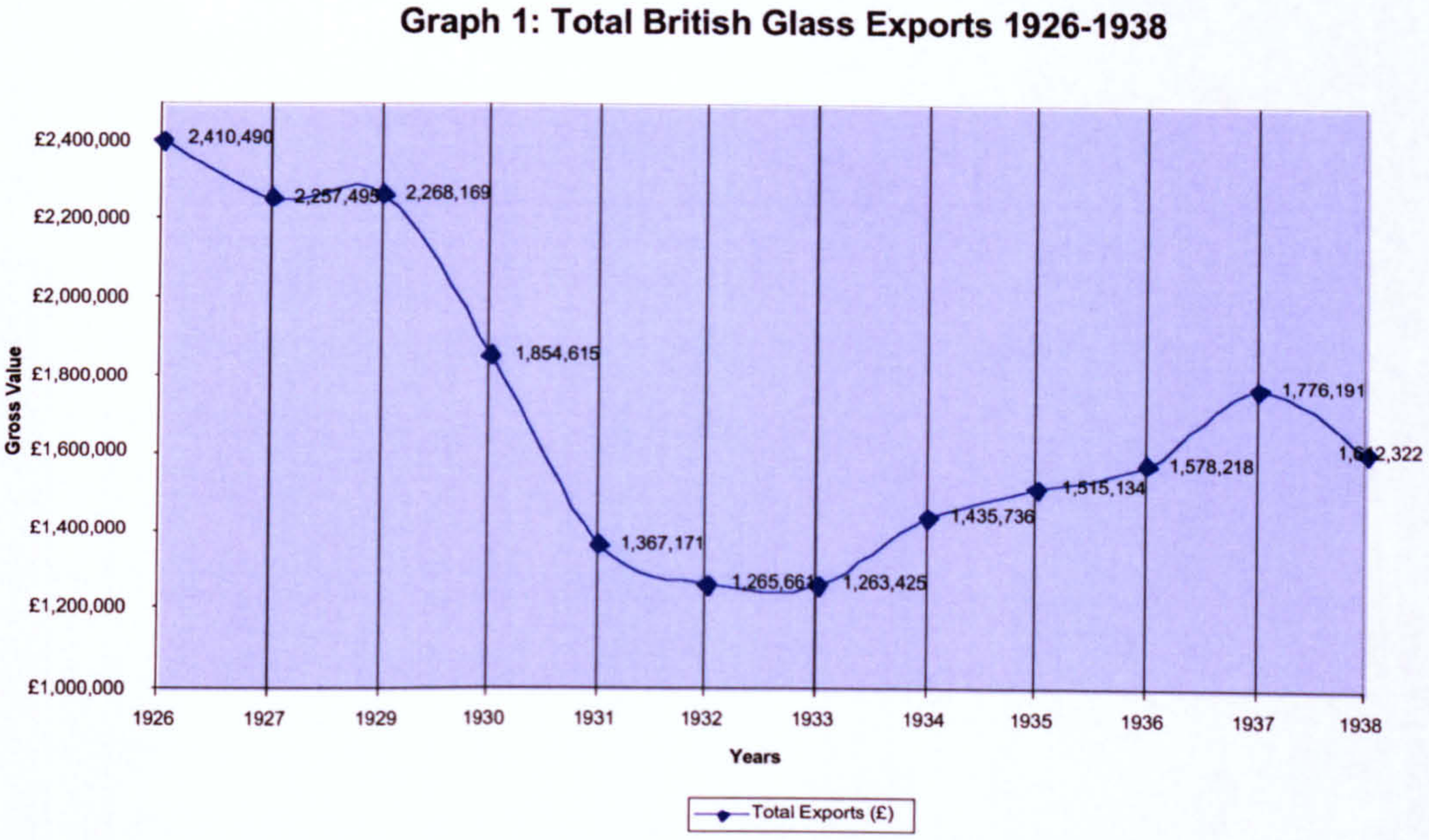
[57] See Robert Boyce's concise account of the economic effects of the Wall Street Crash on Britain trade and industry in John Ramsden (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth –Century British Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.673.

[58] The data for Graphs 1-5 is taken from the annually published tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' *The Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions). The individual graphs were compiled by extrapolating, tabulating and plotting specific data from those combined tables.

[59] They were the type of 'once in a lifetime' luxury items which did not need to be replaced on a regular basis, and were not particularly subject to fashion change that were bought so their purchase could be postponed or substituted for cheaper versions.

came from central Europe, especially Czechoslovakia (formerly Bohemia) where labour was less expensive and Belgium, which had a highly mechanised glass industry.



Graph 1

Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

However, the lower prices of imported domestic glassware did not necessarily imply low quality, indeed perceptions at that time seemed to infer the opposite. For example, Pevsner claimed that the low costs of imported glass reflected a higher level of specialisation and more investment in modern equipment than in Britain.[60] That inference was disingenuous on Pevsner's part as he admitted that the lower costs of wares from Czechoslovakia reflected the unregulated nature of employment with much work put out to home-workers, thus saving on labour costs. Pevsner was either unaware or he perhaps chose to ignore the likely exploitation of skilled hand workers, which enabled good quality hand-made

[60] Nikolaus Pevsner, op.cit. *Enquiry*, pp 84 – 91.

wares to be sold alongside the cheapest British machine-made ones in the same price category.[61] Implicit in such inconsistencies is an attack by Pevsner on what he saw as the out datedness of domestic glassmaking in Britain and a tendency to associate what he believed to be 'good' or Modernist glass design with modern methods of production.

Pevsner's analysis was shared by other Modernist commentators who like him, commended the tumblers and wineglasses sold in Woolworth's for 3d (just over 1p in decimal terms) and 6d (2.5p), for their quality and design.[62] The exemplary Woolworth's glass seemed to prove that Modern needs could be satisfied both functionally and aesthetically by so-called 'mass production'. However, it can also be interpreted as an attack on expensive British hand-made and decorated glass, which by inference was old-fashioned, out-dated and poor value by comparison with Modern versions made abroad.

The threat of cheaper imports to the home market was clearly a real one as a 50% tariff was levied against imported glass in 1931 when Britain finally abandoned free trade.[63] A good insight in the extent to which protective duties benefited manufacturers of lead crystal is evident from the graph of annual import figures of domestic and fancy glass (see Graph 2), which shows that there was a marked and dramatic decline in the annual value of this category of

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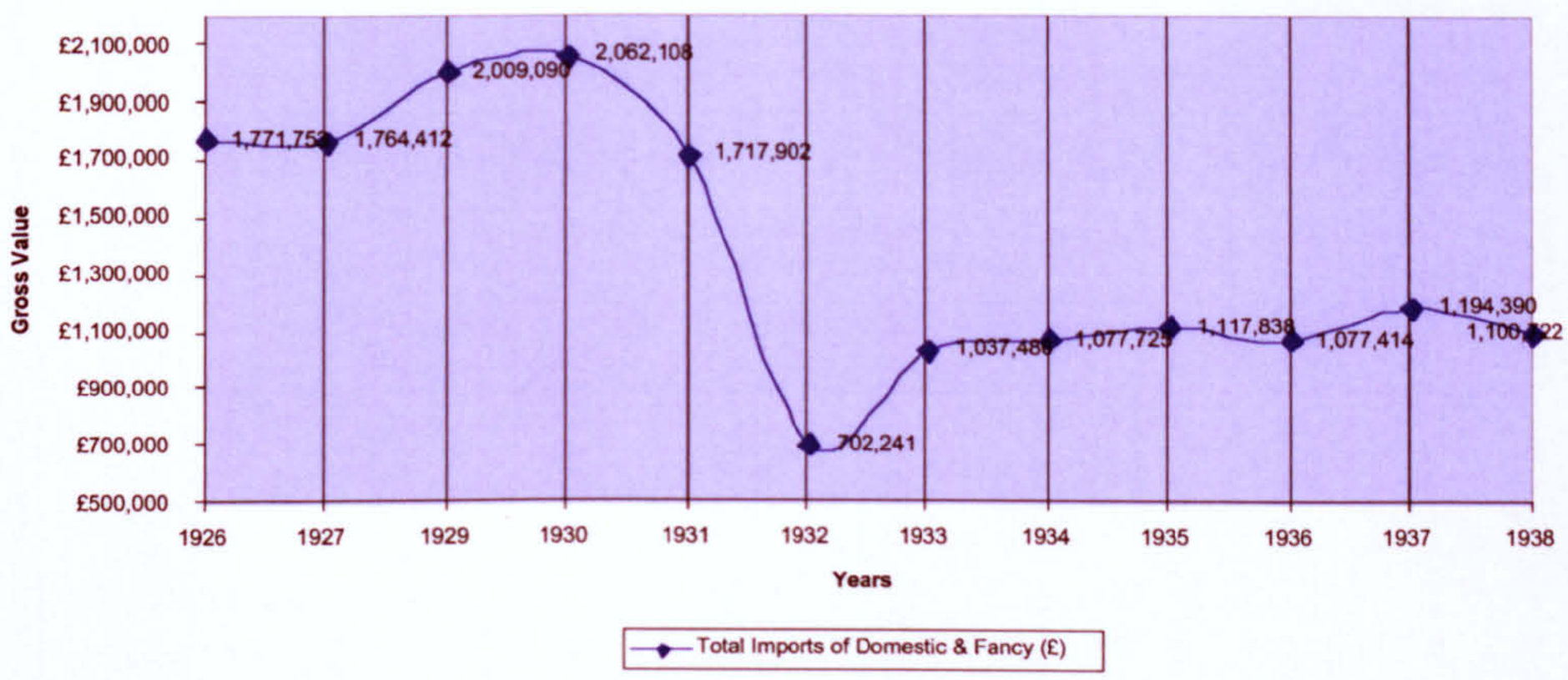
[61] Both Pevsner and Herbert Read acknowledged social and ethical dimensions to issues of mechanisation. Their thesis was largely drawn from the ideas expressed by William Morris (that mechanisation would in time free the worker from a life of sweated labour). However, this was expressed as a desirable outcome of the Machine Age rather than a central tenet of Modernism. See Herbert Read, op.cit. *Art and Industry*, pp 27 – 33 and Nikolaus Pevsner,.Chapter 1, 'Theories of Art from Morris to Gropius' and Chapter 2,'From 1851 to Morris and the Arts & Crafts', in op.cit. *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, pp 19 – 67. The brave new world of mass production by automated machinery, which Modernists advocated, was meant to relieve the drudgery of sweated labour of the early factory system however, both writers expressed much more concern with the social value of the design quality of artefacts and buildings than with the social conditions of their production.

[62] See M.L. Anderson's praise for the genuinely inexpensive table glass available at Woolworth's which he hoped might inspire British glass manufactures to emulate: "Sixpence each at Woolworth's" in 'Scenario for a National Exhibition' *Architectural Review,* Vol. 74, 1933, pp 33-36.

[63] Roger Dodsworth, 'Introduction', op cit. *British Glass Between the Wars*, p. 9.

imports particularly after 1931 when tariffs were imposed. The graph indicates that imports of 'domestic and fancy' glass (the category of imports that would have been the most threatening to British producers of domestic glass with ambitions to focus sales attention on the home market), fell from a high of over two million pounds in 1930 to a low of just above £700,000 in 1932, a drop in overall value of imports of approximately 65%.[64] Furthermore, although imports increased after the 1932 nadir, the graph indicates a levelling out from about 1933 as imports stabilised at around one million pounds by value per annum (approximately 50% of the typical value of the pre-tariff years).

Graph 2: Total Imports of Domestic and Fancy Glass 1926-1938



Graph 2

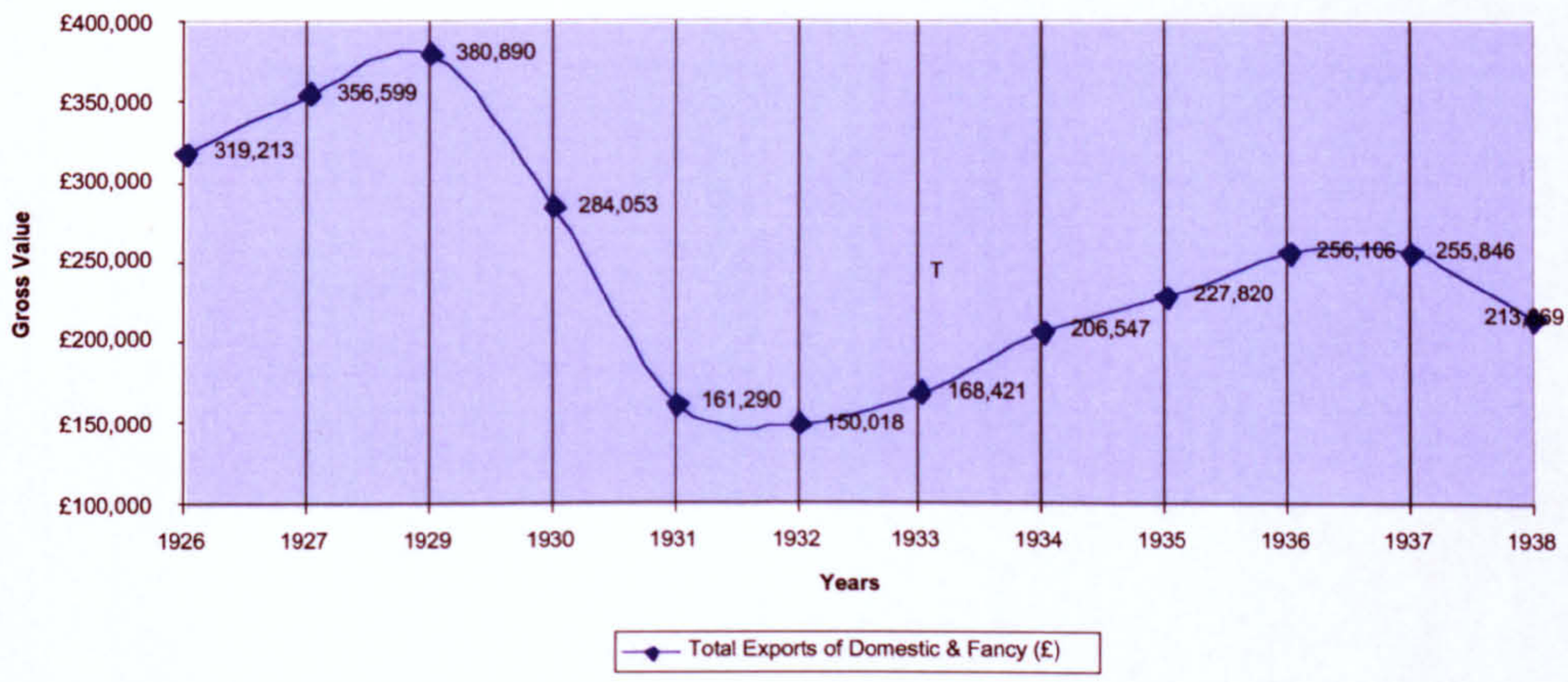
Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

On the one hand this may have convinced British manufacturers of domestic glass that tariff controls were indeed effective in protecting the home market. On the other hand it may have simply reflected the general drop in output and consumption affecting the international glass trade as a whole. The export figures for British domestic and fancy glass, (see Graph 3) also shows a parallel

[64] Firms such as Stevens & Williams increasingly looked to supply the home market as the world recession affected overseas trade especially the hitherto lucrative North American markets

decline of more than 50% from 1930 to 1932. It was this category that represented Stevens & Williams output so this graph confirms that the firm's difficulties, which are discussed later in this chapter, were part of a broader national trend affecting manufacturing businesses that relied on exporting their products. [65] It also proves that the world recession was indeed the major cause of sales losses rather than unfair competition from other countries as British manufactures had claimed.

Table 3: Total Exports of Domestic and Fancy Glass 1926-1938



Graph 3

Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

In reality, the production of this category of wares constituted a very small part of British glass exports. Graph 4 shows that between 1926 and 1938, 'domestic and fancy' glass never accounted for more than 17% of total glass exports by value. A comparison of the proportional disparity between the values of exported and imported glass in this category shown in Graphs 2 and 3 also implies that Britain relied on imports to supply essential domestic wares which

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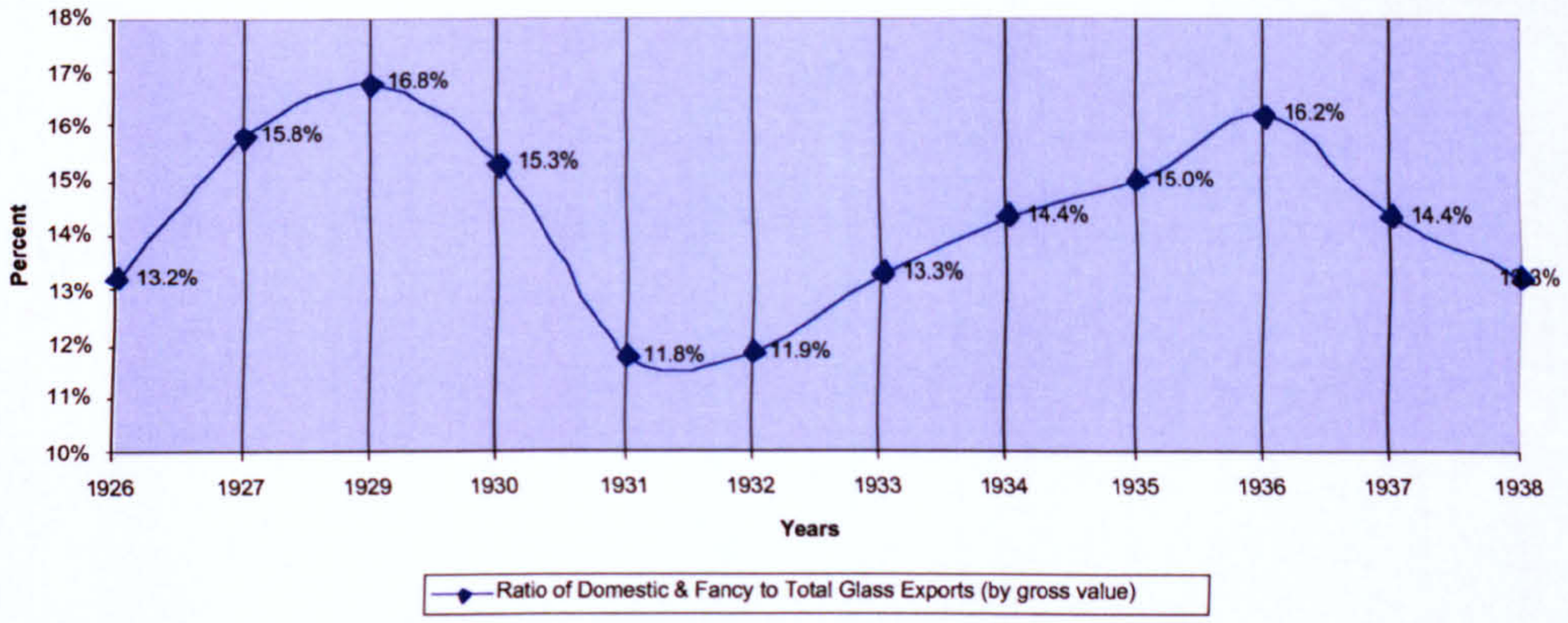
[65] The category 'Domestic & Fancy' was one of seven types of glass (the other six being: Scientific & Tubing; Illuminating; Plate & Sheet; Optical; Bottles & Jars; and Other Glass), whose performance was measured annually for the *PGGTR* tables of Imports and Exports.

it did not have the capacity to produce for its home market.[66] The rapid decline in the ratio of 'domestic and fancy' wares to all other classes of British glass exports between 1929 and 1933, to a low of less than 12%, gives proof (if it were needed) that this particular category that included the high value, low volume luxury trade which Stevens & Williams products typified, was indeed harder hit by the world recession than other sectors of the glass industry. This analysis of sales and exports for the period vindicates Stevens & Williams' decision to focus its efforts on the home market and the employment of Murray to facilitate that strategic decision.

Graph 4: Domestic and Fancy Exports as a Percentage of Total Glass Exports (1926-1938)



Graph 4

Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

Catering almost exclusively for the home market during the economic depression of the 1930s proved to be very challenging to firms such as Stevens & Williams, whose main product was expensive to produce and consequently at the luxury end of the market. Furthermore, mass unemployment in the North of

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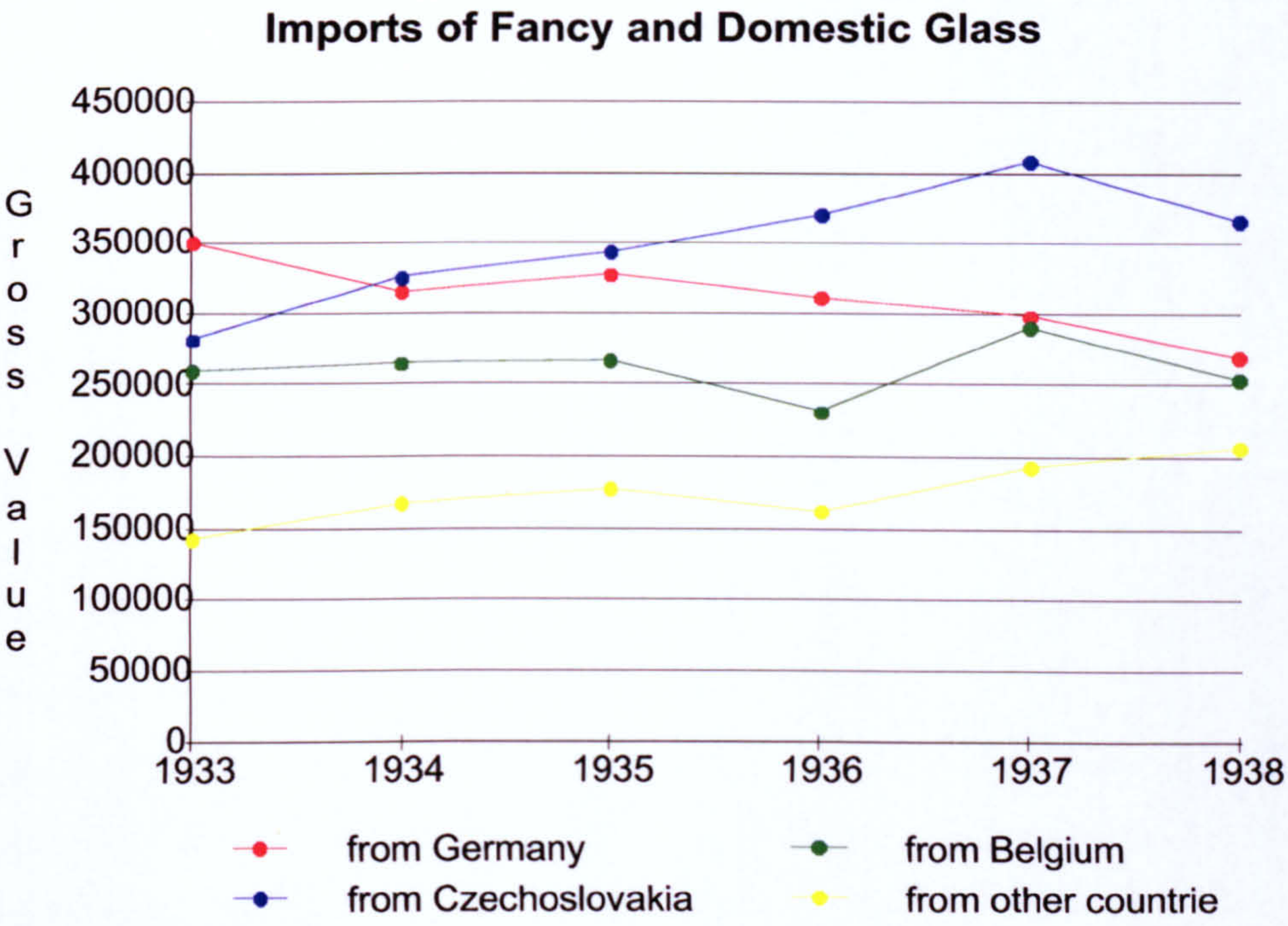
[66] This was certainly the view of Pevsner from his survey of the English glass trade (op. cit. *Enquiry*. p. 86). He wrote: 'The bulk of the cheap trade was destroyed by the great depression of 1875 – 85. Since then England has no longer been able to compete with Belgium and Bohemia. Manufacturers did not want or could not afford to modernize their plants…..So England resigned herself to having only a high-grade crystal trade and buying cheaper goods abroad.'

England meant that internal markets were very competitive and prices tended to stagnate or even fall. Anecdotal evidence of differences between the depressed market in the North of England and the design-conscious market in the more prosperous Midlands and South of England supports that analysis.[67] A key perception from within the trade was that in the latter regions there was harsh competition from imported Swedish glass, an issue that is analysed later in this chapter.[68]



Graph 5

Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

[67] Gilbert Hill, formerly a sales representative for Stevens & Williams encountered to resistance in the North of England to a specially prepared low-cost package of items. Hill recalled shopkeepers' incredulity at being asked to pay £5.00 (wholesale) for the package when they would expect to stock their entire shop for such an amount. Personal interview with Major Gilbert Hill, former sales manager at Stevens & Williams, May 1985. The transcript of that interview is included as an appendix to this thesis. See Appendix IV.

[68] Ibid. Hill recalled the sales team's frustration with buyers for the more fashionable department stores who were inclined exclusively towards Modern Swedish table glass and home accessories

To precisely assess the extent to which imports of Swedish glass had eroded the home market for quality glass as suggested in anecdotal accounts is problematic. Nevertheless a good insight can be gained from the breakdown of annual imports by value of domestic and fancy glass from individual glass making countries as represented in Graph 5. The tabulated data from which this graph is drawn indicated that the three major importers to this country of 'fancy and domestic' glass were Czechoslovakia, Germany and Belgium in that order. The major product in this category for all three countries was inexpensive table glass, a class of wares with which manufacturers of hand-made glass would not have attempted to compete. Imports from Sweden, France, Austria, the USA and the colonies would have been subsumed in the fourth category - 'from other countries', which collectively had the lowest value than the other three individual countries.

The entire category of imports 'from other countries' approximately matches the total amounts of exported domestic and fancy glass in the same category from Britain. Thus, the economic analysis by itself does not provide substantive proof that imported Swedish glass was a real threat to market for Modern glass design in Britain. There are however, other indications that non-price factors (especially design) were increasingly effective in terms of competition for the British home market. It is in that context that Stevens & Williams' decision to employ a freelance designer primarily to design Modernist glass in order to compete with Swedish imports and the resultant Keith Murray glass range should be examined.

Part Two: Murray's Working Relationship with Stevens & Williams Ltd

Employment dates

The account of how the architect Keith Murray became employed as a freelance designer of glass for Stevens & Williams is not fully documented in the firm's records. Various sources suggest that the starting date as either 1931[69], or 1932[70] or even 1934[71]. This chapter about Murray's working relationship with Stevens & Williams and the following chapter about Wedgwood, examines extensive sources to establish a more historically accurate account. Murray wrote about his first foray into designing for industry in 1933. His own account was corroborated by Pevsner's writings about the firm in 1937 and in an oral account by former Chairman, Colonel Reginald Williams-Thomas.[72] Museum curators at the V&A talked to and corresponded with Keith Murray in the 1970s[73] and the design historian, Fiona MacCarthy corresponded with Murray

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[69] 1931- Nikolaus Pevsner, op.cit. *Enquiry*, p. 89

[70] 1932 – Jennifer Hawkins (ed.), *Keith Murray,* (exhibition brochure), Victoria & Albert Museum / HMSO, 1976. Jennifer Hawkins and Marianne Hollis (eds) *Thirties: British Art and Design Before the War,* Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979, p 297. Simon Jervis, *Dictionary of Design and Designers,* Penguin, 1984, p347.

[71] 1934 – (Stevens and Williams firm's archive). Reginald Williams Thomas, who managed the modern line in the 1930s, wrote an appraisal of Keith Murray in which he gave 1934 as the start date for Murray at the firm. There are sufficient published examples of Murray's work before 1934 to ignore that date. In oral interviews with me, R. Williams-Thomas gave 1932 as the start year.

[72] Unpublished interview (I) with Reginald Williams-Thomas, 28 October 1983 and unpublished interview (II) with Reginald Williams-Thomas, 14 May 1986. The transcript of each interview is included as an appendix to this thesis. See Appendices V & VI respectively

[73] V&A Curator, Carol Hogben, interviewed Murray at his home in Dorset in the mid-1970s. That was in preparation for the *Keith Murray* exhibition of 1976. The exhibition brochure written by Jennifer Hawkins (now Opie) stated that Murray worked for the firm from 1932. Hawkins went on to curate the *Thirties* exhibitions and was co-editor of the eponymous publication (the biographical section of the catalogue). It is not surprising that publications using V&A sources continued to cite the 1932 start date. This is not problematic, as Murray could not have undertaken much work for the firm if one accepts the alternative, i.e. that he started in late 1931. More problematic is the fact that the same 1976 source cited 1933 as the year that Murray started to work for Wedgwood, see Hawkins op.cit. *Thirties*. That date is inaccurate as my discussion in Chapter Three explains.

in 1968.[74] There is some disagreement as to whether Murray started with the firm in 1931 or 1932. Murray's correspondence with MacCarthy (1968) stated that he worked for both Wedgwood and Stevens and Williams from 1931 until the war (i.e. 1939). Pevsner gave 1931 as the start date with Stevens and Williams, whereas the biographical section devoted to Keith Murray in the Arts Council / V&A *Thirties* catalogue cites 1932 for Stevens and Williams and 1933 for Wedgwood. My detailed research leads me to conclude that he started working officially for Stevens & Williams in 1932 for reasons that are discussed below.

Whatever the case, 1931 was a significant year for both Murray and Stevens and Williams because of the staging of the *Swedish Exhibition* at Dorland Hall, London which was so influential in terms of glass design. Murray and Hubert Williams-Thomas, Managing Director of Stevens & Williams had attended the exhibition independently and been impressed by the extensive displays of contemporary domestic glass.[75] Murray recalled that after seeing the exhibition:

> '... I made a mass of drawings of old glass and then tried drawings for modern glass, and later on for pottery. One thing led to another and in 1931 I was taken on as an outside designer by Stevens and Williams and shortly after by Wedgwood.'[76]

Murray's article of 1933 outlined the process of making contact with suitable glass manufacturers, the first being Marriot Powell of James Powell and Sons (Whitefriars)Ltd.[77] Powell evidently was interested in Murray's designs to the extent of arranging for a set of samples to be made. These proved to be unsuitable to that firm's production methods probably because Powell's

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[74] I was told this by Fiona MacCarthy who corresponded in 1968 with Murray as part of her research for her book *All Things Bright and Beautiful,* George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1972, revised as, *A History of British Design 1830 – 1970,* George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1979.

[75] Op.cit. interview (II) with Reginald Williams-Thomas, 1986.

[76] Letter from Keith Murray to Fiona MacCarthy 17th Feb 1968. Fiona MacCarthy kindly forwarded a photocopy of that letter to me.

[77] Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', *Design For Today,* June 1933, pp 53 – 56

specialised in free-blown glass whereas Murray's precise profiles lent themselves to mould blowing.[78] Through his contact with Powell's Murray was introduced to the Stourbridge firm, Stevens & Williams.[79] Murray stated that Gordon Russell and Ambrose Heal had discussed his ideas in advance of his interview at Stevens & Williams with the firm's Managing Director, Hubert Williams-Thomas.[80]

Murray's account concurred with that of Hubert's son, Reginald Williams-Thomas, who recalled that the Swedish glass on display at Dorland Hall in 1931 had impressed his father and set him thinking about modern designs for glass.[81] His father had consulted with Harry Trethowan, buyer of ceramics and glass for Heal and Son Ltd., about coming up with new lines inspired by the example of Swedish manufacturers. Reginald Williams-Thomas was certain that although Stevens & Williams were seeking directional advice regarding design, his father was definitely not looking for a designer.[82] Hubert Williams-Thomas was apparently impressed from the outset with Murray and his designs because he selected some of Murray's designs for sample production and Murray was employed as a free-lance designer under contract to the firm.

It is reasonably conclusive that Murray began to design glass in 1931, after seeing the *Swedish Exhibition* in London.[83] The earliest material evidence of

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[78] Ibid. p 54. I am not entirely convinced by that argument. In common with many medium size glass houses of that period, most of the designing was done in-house by its directors, James Hogan (stained glass), Marriot Powell and Barnaby Powell. I think it more likely that Powell recognised that Murray's approach to design was better suited to a larger producer where the economies of scale could support the cost of a freelance designer of shapes.

[79] Antony Heal of Heal and Son claimed that this came about through his father, Ambrose Heal's intervention. Personal letter from Antony Heal , 1985.

[80] Murray was not specific about the actual intermediary (it is also possible that Marriot Powell either effected an introduction to the firm or recommended Stevens & Williams as the type of manufacturer who might make best use of Murray's particular approach to design). Keith Murray, op.cit. 'The Design of Table Glass', p.54

[81] Op.cit. Interview (II) with Reginald Williams-Thomas, 1986. See Appendix VI.

[82] Ibid.

[83] *Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Arts*, Dorland Hall, London, 17 March to 22 April 1931. This exhibition was sometimes referred to as the *Swedish Arts & Crafts* exhibition.

Murray working at Stevens & Williams is a large freehand working drawing that is stamped with Murray's monogram (KM) and dated 16th April 1932 in the firm's archives The received understanding is that Murray continued to design for the firm until the Second World War. Although it is possible that Murray had started to design glass in 1931 the most accurate statement regarding his professional employment at Stevens & Williams would be that he designed for them from c.1932 – c.1939.

Remuneration and terms

The terms of Murray's employment as a freelance designer are not recorded in the firm's papers and there are also several versions of how much he was paid and for how many months per year. In 1968 Murray stated that he had earned £250.00 per annum from each of the three firms for which he designed.[84] Reginald Williams-Thomas recalled that Murray was paid about £700. 00 per annum (which he claimed was 'about twice a parson's stipend').[85]. Murray claimed that his largest annual salary as a designer was £750 and that was in the mid 1930s when he worked for three companies.[86] Pevsner's account suggests that Murray's own recollections were the more accurate. In *Enquiry* (1937) he wrote pertaining to Murray's employment at Stevens & Williams: '…the architect … is paid for two months work ...[87] He made generalised comments on the payment of designers in the industries for which Murray worked: '...the salary range for staff designers in the medium-sized glass, pottery and metal work industries is in the region of £150 - £450 per annum, with £250 -£300

[84] Op.cit. Letter from Keith Murray to Fiona MacCarthy 1968

[85] He considered that to be a generous remuneration for the equivalent of three months' work. In addition, he recalled that Murray was paid a retainer plus expenses but did not receive royalty payments for his designs. Op. cit. Interview (I) (Appendix V)

[86] Ibid. Murray also recalled being very hard up and often limiting himself to sixpenny meals in ABC Cafés. Op.cit. Correspondence between Keith Murray and Fiona MacCarthy 1968. Reginald Williams-Thomas also remembered Murray being impecunious, so it is unlikely that Murray was paid as generously as recalled by Stevens & Williams.

[87] Pevsner. *Enquiry*, op cit p 90

being the average.'[88] He summarised the various payment methods that the few firms who employed freelance architect-designers:

> 'Mr Voysey received fees of £10 - £12 for a wallpaper or cretonne design, Serge Chermeyeff received about £50 for each of his designs for radio sets, Mr Keith Murray receives the value of one or two months' work from each of the firms for which he works, and royalties on top of that.' [89]

It is clear that he believed the latter case to represent the best arrangement for both manufacturer and freelance designer in 'creative' industries (as opposed to 'technical' industries such as manufacturers of electrical appliances). For the former he advocated:

> '... the employment of a part-time designer or artist of high standing. A small firm would pay as much as before, say £200 or £300, but pay it to a first-rate man for one or two months' work, which would be sufficient to cope with the annual demand for new designs in most firms. It would then be necessary only to have on the staff skilled draughtsmen for mechanical reproduction work.'[90]

It appears to be the case that the particular model envisaged by Pevsner was based on Murray's arrangements with Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood. With respect to Pevsner's discussion of fees and salaries, Murray's own assertion that he was paid £250 per annum is probably accurate, and it is assured that he did not receive royalties from Stevens & Williams.

The Keith Murray glass range

The Keith Murray Glass range was marketed as a separate entity to the firm's regular production and resources were made available to promote the range, especially at the firm's London showroom. In keeping with the art glass tradition most of the pieces, especially the decorated wares were etched or stamped with the designer's signature. The fact that it was reasonably well

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[88] Ibid p 193.

[89] Ibid p 199.

[90] Ibid p 196.

resourced at a time of real financial hardship within the industry signalled that it was a serious venture for the firm. In that respect, the firm's venture into Modern design seems to have been born out of a more long-term vision for its future direction, which embraced the idea of modernity as well as tradition.

Managing the Keith Murray glass venture

If Reginald Williams-Thomas was mistaken in some of his factual reminiscences recalled more than 50 years after the event, he was in other respects a valuable commentator on Murray's working relationship with the firm.[91] Indeed, this thesis and several of the papers about Murray that I have written and published (as cited in the introductory chapter) are indebted to the support he gave to me both in terms of allowing me to interview him and in making the firm's pattern books, drawings and documents available for study.[92] He was in a unique position to do so because when he entered the family firm he was given the job of managing the firm's new venture into 'modern' design under his father, Hubert's, direction.[93] That meant in practice that Murray reported directly to him and that Reginald was involved in: '...selecting designs, pricing, marketing, which meant showrooms and displays, calling on

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[91] Reginald Williams-Thomas was the firm's Chairman in the 1980s and his son, David Williams-Thomas was Managing Director. He published a history of the firm: *The Crystal Years – A Tribute to the Skills and Artistry of Stevens & Williams,* Brierley Hill, 1983. He died in 1988, before the bankruptcy of 1998 which finished the family firm.

[92] Later in his life, Reginald Williams Thomas began to collate material, including his own recollections, which documented and assessed Keith Murray's employment at the firm and his contribution to glass design. This was not published but was available in file format at the firm's museum until it closed in 1998. There is more than a hint of regret in the file title, *Keith Murray: an Underrated Designer*. It suggests that he was acknowledging a degree of culpability with regards to the firm's long term failure to develop and sustain the vision that he and Murray had shared in the 1930s for the modernisation of British glass.

[93] He started working for the firm in 1932 as very young man. As part of the preparation for his role in the firm, Reginald Williams-Thomas spent a month on placement at Gordon Russell's Broadway factory and showrooms. The connection was that Stevens and Williams manufactured a range of table glass designed by Russell and sold at the Gordon Russell Ltd. Showrooms in Broadway. Ref: Personal letter from R. Williams-Thomas to Diane Taylor, 3rd Jan.1985. Russell himself was a major figure in the design reform movement and had been instrumental in bringing Murray to Stevens & Williams.

customers, everything really.'[94] A close, sympathetic relationship developed between Murray and the young Williams-Thomas based on their mutual interest in Modern design. They attended DIA meetings together and travelled abroad to international exhibitions in Brussels (1935) and Paris (1937).[95]

Working arrangements and records

Murray worked at the firm for one week every two months approximately. He would arrive with 40 or 50 drawings, from which possibly a dozen would be selected for sample production.[96] Suggestions would be made for alterations and alternatives to be worked on back in his London studio. Reginald Williams-Thomas recalled:

> ' Keith was very prolific. Perhaps one gave him the idea that there was a hole in the market for something different - it might be that we didn't want any more vases because we'd got plenty, but perhaps some bowls or lily-bowls or bathroom sets, you see and then he would produce twenty or thirty designs of just that one thing.'[97]

A hand drawn and hand written ledger, the *Keith Murray Description Book,* (hereafter the *KMD Book*) has survived as a very important record of Murray's designs in glass.[98] The designs are in chronological order because they were inserted in the book as they were selected from Murray's drawings for sampling and costing.[99] The designs in the book are in numerical order from 100A

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[94] Op.cit. interview (II) with Reginald Williams-Thomas, 1986. The young Williams-Thomas was evidently being prepared for a directorial role in the firm promoting more modern directions in design. That role may well have included making designs as well as directing the designers and developing a retail market for its modern lines. Certainly Reginald Williams Thomas began to design some items that sold alongside the Keith Murray range. Indeed, it was in the tradition of family firms such as Stevens & Williams that the directors did have a major involvement in designing

[95] Op.cit. Interview (I) (Appendix V)

[96] Op.cit. Interview (II) (Appendix VI)

[97] Op.cit. Interview (I) (Appendix V)

[98] The design book is currently in the keeping of Broadfield House Glass Museum.

[99] It is possible that there was a time lag between Murray's conceptual sketches and the first date that a certain design was produced as Murray was often asked to design certain items or

–1189A; that is 1089 individual pieces, or sets.[100] It is important to note that sets of items, for example table services, sherry and cocktail sets and bathroom sets comprised a single entry in the book, as did items available in multiple sizes (for example, vases and bowls were often offered in small, medium and large sizes). The total of numbered entries concurs reasonably with Pevsner who reported that Murray made about 150 designs a year for the firm.[101]

Reginald Williams-Thomas explained that Murray's designs selected for sample production were included as numbered entries in the design ledger:

> 'They weren't all successful when they went in the book. They went in the book if samples of them were produced for costing, then they were tried on the market and those which sold well were kept.' [102]

The shape of each item was drawn in miniature by drawing office staff and any decoration (eg fluting, engraved motif or pattern etc) was indicated on or at the side of the drawing, (see Fig 2:1).[103] Other descriptive annotation was written by hand against the designs, for example the colour or colours of the metal or the various sizes in which the piece would be produced and even the weight of the piece in pre-metric pounds.[104]

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lines that the firm was short on, for example, bathroom sets, decanters or bowls. Murray could then re-present earlier designs that formerly were not initially selected for sampling.

[100] The range started at 100 rather than No. 1 in accordance with commercial conventions. Although the range was new, the firm preferred to indicate that it was established. The 'A' after each number was used to distinguish Murray's designs from the firm's other pattern numbers. (Sam Thompson).

[101] Pevsner cited the figure of 150 designs per year (out of a total of 500 new designs required by the firm) in Op cit. *Enquiry*, p 90

[102] Op.cit. Interview (II) with Reginald Williams-Thomas, 1986

[103] Sam Thompson recalled that he and his colleague, the staff designer Tom Jones were responsible for the hand drawn entries in the book. See op.cit. Appendix III.

[104] Ibid. The figures relate to the weight of the item before decoration.

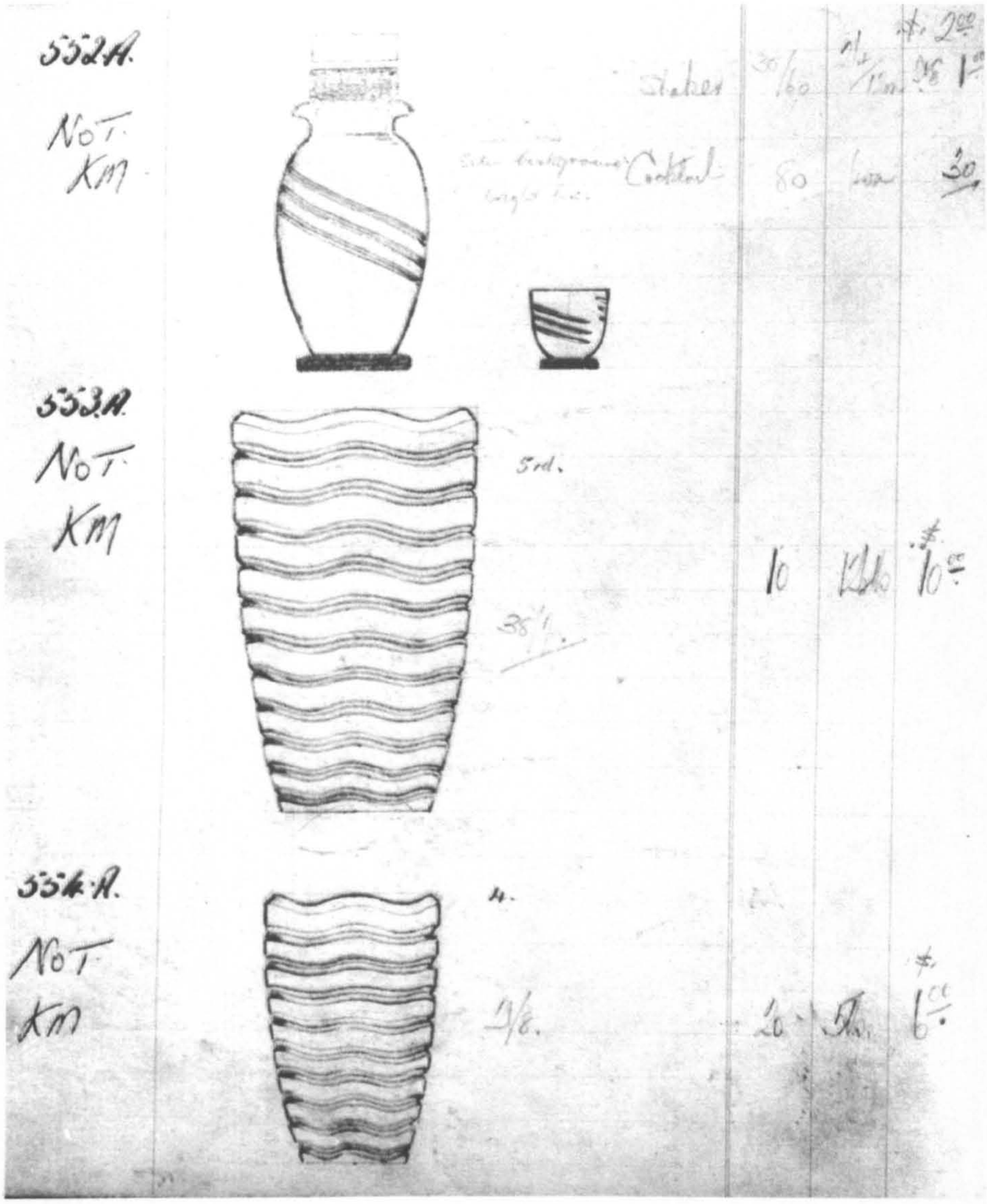

Fig. 2:1

Page from the KMD Book showing designs attributed to Reginald Williams-Thomas – note the annotations 'Not KM' (Keith Murray)

Annotations alongside the cocktail shaker (design number 552A) shown in the illustrated example indicate that its background was to be 'satin finished' to contrast with the 'bright' (i.e. polished) mitre cut lines. Information relating to costing and timings was written in the margins. The most important of these relate to the number of pieces that could be made in a six-hour shift and the length of time taken required for decorating pieces. That information provided the basis for calculating factory price of individual designs. Details pertaining

to the vase (design number 554A) indicate that the costs for making and decoration were based on the following estimated factors; 20 blanks to be made per shift; each blank utilising 5 lb of molten metal; cutting time for each vase – 6 hours.

Table 1

Des. Numbers in KMD book	***Date range (approx)***
100 - 250	**1932 -3**
251- 400	**1933 -4**
401 - 550	**1934 -5**
551 - 700	**1935 -6**
701 - 850	**1936 -7**
851 - 1000	**1937-8**
1001 -1150	**1938 -9**
1151 - 1189	**1939**

The *KMD Book* represents a comprehensive catalogue of Murray's executed designs in glass. The table above (Table 1) was compiled in order to ascertain approximate dates for individually numbered design entries in the book. It is calculated on the basis that Murray designed about 150 new designs per year.[105] The dates indicate when a design was first put into production or made up for sampling purposes. It is also necessary to take into account that a small number of designs in that book were not by Murray, as evidenced by the annotations

[105] Allowing for 150 designs each year leaves an anomalous number of 38 designs for 1939 which may not be accurate.

discernible in Fig. 2:1.[106] Thus, 'Keith Murray' should be considered as the generic title for the firm's experimental glass during the years that Murray worked there. The indication is that Murray was responsible for most of the designs in that book and that they all date from the 1930s. Taking those factors into account this table provides a useful guideline to dating examples of Murray's glass designs.

There is evidence in the archive that Murray drafted accurate and large-scaled drawings possibly at the works after they were selected from the sheaths of drawings made in London in the interval between his visits. He may also have arrived from London with some detailed drawings worked up from his previous visit to the factory, when amendments to his designs had been suggested. Certain items in the *KMD Book* indicate that Murray made larger and more detailed working drawings for pictorial designs such as vases and bowls with engraved pictorial scenes and fluted designs, where the precise size and number of vertical flutes is critical. Confirmation of that working practice was contained in the collection of 30 loose drawings in the Stevens & Williams archive (as it existed in the 1980s), many signed by Murray or stamped with the KM monogram.

That collection included small and large sketches by Murray and several large scale (i.e. larger than actual size) precisely drafted drawings for decanters and wine glasses, vases, lamps, table services, a cocktail set, bathroom sets and two commemorative designs for the coronation of Edward VIII. [107] Cross-checking the few drawings in the archive that were dated provided a useful way of confirming the dates of items in the *KMD Book.*[108]

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[106] Some of the designs are annotated 'NOT KM'. Both Reginald Williams Thomas and Sam Thompson told me that the book included at least two designs by Reginald Williams-Thomas, one or more by his father, Hubert, (then Managing Director) and possibly a few designs by staff designer, Tom Jones who went on to make a few Modernist designs for the firm after the war

[107] There were a total of 30 sketches, working drawings and accurately drafted drawings in the firm's archives before its dispersal in 1998. Some items were sold in the Sotheby's sale of that year. The rest may be waiting cataloguing at the Broadfield House Glass Museum.

[108] There are four dated loose-leaf drawings relating to similar or identical designs in the KM works book, which indicate that my assumptions about dates is accurate for 1932, 1933, 1936

Murray's own contemporary reports of his working relationship at Stevens & Williams suggested a more direct working method, whereby he consulted with the various craftsmen at the firm about the viability of his latest designs, almost invariably in sketch form.[109] That concurred with Sam Thompson's recollections of Murray's visits to the firm. He remembered Murray consulting with the glass makers and being prepared to make alterations at their suggestion, or indeed, tearing up a sketch if it were explained to him that the design was not suited to production processes.[110]

At least three examples of Keith Murray drawings in the archive do not relate to any drawings in the *KMD Book* which indicates that they were not taken up for production purposes.[111] In several other examples there are subtle differences between original sketches and the equivalent drawing of the design as rendered for production purposes as drawn in the *KMD Book*.[112] Those changes include differences in the stopper designs for decanters, the omission of contrasting coloured feet in a wine set and the addition of engraved motifs to designs for undecorated vases and drinking sets. Such changes indicate that styling details as well as technical considerations were taken into account at the stage when designs were selected and prepared for manufacture.

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and 1937. A fourth drawing of a decanter and wine set dated 3rd December 1934, relates to two similar designs in the *KMD Book* numbered 571A and 652A. By my calculation, they would have been made c. 1935 -6. It is entirely feasible that the drawing was resurrected a year or so later when those specific items were called for. There is no instance of a dated loose-leaf drawing relating to a design in the *KMD Book* of an earlier date. I am satisfied therefore, that my calculations are reasonably accurate at least up to 1937

[109] See Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass' op. cit and Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer' Journal of the Society of Glass Technology, Vol 19, 1935, pp 10 – 17.

[110] Discussion with Sam Thompson (Diane Taylor) 1985

[111] One such example is a drawing with the KM monogram and dated 6th June 1934. This shows a set of plain table glass and a cocktail shaker and stem glasses.

[112] As for example in the previously cited drawing of the decanter and wine set dated 3rd December 1934, which relates approximately to two similar designs in the *KMD Book* numbered 571A and 652A.

Designing for production processes

The experience of working with trained craftsmen at the factory evidently had a significant impact on Murray's approach to glass design and to his general design methodology. He had made his first designs for glass before he was familiar with production processes and, as a consequence, some of those early designs had to be modified when put into production.[113] Aesthetically, those changes tended to be away from the severe geometric profiles of Murray's drawn shapes towards slightly more curvaceous outlines of the finished pieces.[114] The comparison showed that the rather severe and rectilinear profile of the drawing was transformed into a softer and more curvaceous form in the vessel itself. Such differences were the natural outcome of hand-forming processes involved in heat-worked (i.e. molten) glass. Although Murray accepted that the interplay of materials and processes had some determining effect on form and finishes, he nonetheless persevered with more modern, precise shapes as is shown in Chapter Four. As far as he was concerned the relationship between freelance designer and manufacturer was a two-way process. Of his introduction to the firm he wrote:

> ...for the first time I began to make regular contact with the craftsmen. Now began a period of alterations and editings in which I had to adapt myself to the materials and the processes, and in which the factory had to adapt itself to my conception of form.[115]

The straight-sided profiles associated with many of Murray's designs were more suited to mould blowing, which he argued '...admits of an entirely

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[113] Murray, Op.Cit. 'The Design of Table Glass', illustrations and captions on pp. 53 and 55. Murray's article included an illustration of one of his earliest set of drawings for glass designed before he had seen glass-making processes at first hand to demonstrate how his early ideas had to be modified for manufacture. He also explained how, in the processes of manufacture (especially hand blowing), his shapes were modified.

[114] Ibid. The example he gave was a comparison between a drawing of a large fluted vase 'made before the designer was familiar with the process' and a photograph of the piece as produced.

[115] Ibid. p 54

different group of shapes (to hand-made glass) ...'[116] Stevens & Williams used only traditional hand methods of manufacture for its 'quality' lines, including the Keith Murray glass. The forming methods employed at the firm were firstly hand blowing and secondly blowing in mould.[117] Mould blowing was not generally employed in any systematic way (for example, to speed up production) for the firm's quality lines.[118] Its principal use in that context was to facilitate certain shapes, especially straight-sided forms, which were difficult to blow by hand.[119] Whether his designs were intended for hand blowing or mould blowing methods Murray relied on the co-operation of Steven & Williams' hand-blowers to develop his designs to the prototype stage. This was because the cost and effort in making a new mould would not be undertaken until designs had been tried out with trade buyers.

The evidence confirms that most of the Keith Murray range was produced by hand methods and production runs were generally small scale. Some of Murray's designs were made in quantity, although actual figures for the production of specific items are not known. Murray did design many items that were simpler to manufacture and consequently cheaper than the conventionally-made cut glass which was the firm's speciality, but the general impression is that individual designs were made in batches of dozens rather than runs of hundreds. So, Murray's preference for moulded forms seems to have been driven by aesthetic concerns, an issue which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Teams of skilled workers in the glass house performed both of these operations, although mould blowing did not demand the very highest levels of skills associated with free or hand blowing.

[118] It is likely that blowing in mould was used in conjunction with some mechanised procedures for the contract side of the firm's business at the Brierley Hill works and it was the main mode of production at the firm's lampshade factory at Tipton. There is no record of Murray's involvement with the firm's operations at Tipton.

[119] It was also used to impart particular effects such as optic patterns in the glass. Glass was blow into hinged iron moulds which were expensive to produce. According to Sam Thompson the firm employed a skilled mould maker in the 1930s for that purpose.

Developing a Modernist aesthetic for decorative glass

Despite Murray's insistence that the Stevens and Williams workforce should adapt to the needs of the designer it appears that his greatest challenge was compromising his ideals in order to comply with the demands of the factory. His Modernist interpretation of the role of the designer in industry was principally that of creating new forms suited to modern production and to modern tastes, (a view that is analysed in Chapter Four).[120] However, as we have seen, Murray was not designing for modern production (implying mass production by machine) and his preference for unadorned or barely decorated glass proved especially hard on the cutters and engravers at a time when many Stevens & Williams employees had been laid off or on a two-day week. That aesthetic preference potentially disrupted the systematised flow of goods between the various shaping and decorating shops associated with batch production methods in the 'traditional' lead glass factory.[121]

Furthermore the restrained decoration (or the absence of applied decoration) he preferred was problematic for lead crystal ware because of the increased likelihood of rejects and seconds at the various stages of shaping and decorating, which traditional all-over cut and engraved decoration tended to disguise.[122] In response to those considerations he expanded his repertoire to make a broader range of designs which utilised all the various skilled workshops. Designing patterns and motifs made considerable artistic demands on his skills as a designer but on the evidence of the large proportion of decorative designs in the *KMD Book* he rose to that challenge successfully. The range of designs that Murray made for glass is discussed in the final part of this

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[120] Ibid

[121] Murray was keenly aware that the existence of large decorating shops obligated the designer to make decorative designs in order to keep the decorating workshops busy. Op cit. 'Some Views of a Designer' p 16

[122] Lead crystal is susceptible to bubbles and blemishes in the metal, because of the low temperature at which it becomes molten, (such blemishes tend to disappear in other types of metal, such as soda glass, which is melted at a much higher temperature) a point emphasised by both Sam Thomson and Gilbert Hill in their discussions with me.

chapter (see below). In the breadth of that range we see how his realisation of the consequences of imposing a narrow design aesthetic impelled him to develop a Modernist aesthetic for English lead crystal which could embrace decoration as well as form.

Marketing and Promoting the Keith Murray Glass

Stevens and Williams kept a trade showroom in London where buyers could be entertained and new ranges displayed at 59, Holborn Viaduct, EC1. It was there in January 1933 that the 'Keith Murray' range was launched to the trade. Reginald Williams-Thomas recalled that Murray had designed the interior and the display, which had a grey and black colour scheme. Unlike other aspects of the firm's production, a London-based Public Relations company handled the publicity for the new range.[123] The launch of the new range was advertised in the trade press and subsequently, the Keith Murray glass featured regularly in the firm's advertisements in *PGGTR*.[124] The advertising material associated with the firm's 'designer' range is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four. Suffice it to say here that the high design standards of Stevens & William's 'Keith Murray' advertisements made them suitable for design and consumer-oriented journals.

Within the glass trade itself, a commercial test of Murray's abilities as a designer of glass was the British Industries Fair (BIF) held annually at Olympia.[125] The importance of this trade fair to manufacturers of glass and ceramics is demonstrated by its coverage in the *PGGTR*. Reginald Williams Thomas recalled that he and Murray always attended the fair together to promote their 'modern' range to the buyers and the press. For its first showing at the *BIF* in 1933 a section of the Stevens & Williams' stand was devoted

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[123] Op.cit. Interview (II) (Appendix VI), p. He remembered that it was done "...by a man called Louden".

[124] The first advertisement for the Keith Murray glass appeared on January 2 1933.

[125] At its first showing at the BIF in 1933, the trade press reported that there was a cautious interest in the new range.

exclusively to the Keith Murray glass.[126] Reports of the *BIF* in the trade press focussed especially on the interest shown in the 'Keith Murray' range by Queen Mary and her entourage.[127] Judging from the reportage pertaining to those unofficial (but regular) visits it seems that royal visitors, especially Queen Mary, made a point in seeking out examples of innovative designs, which lends weight to the supposition that she engaged in a serious and informed manner with that unofficial 'duty'.[128]

The significance of royal patronage for industrial arts in the 20th century has been overlooked in historical accounts. Historically, the patronage and testimonials of society figures, and especially royalty was cultivated by manufacturers associated with the decorative arts in order to exploit class or wealth-oriented aspirations of their customers.[129] However, the detailed reporting of the comments and purchases of aristocratic visitors is evidence that

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[126] Reginald Williams-Thomas recalled that that their own display area was about 25 feet (approx 8 metres) in length, which gives some indication of the quantity of new designs that Murray was expected to produce for the fair. Op.cit (Appendix VI

[127] Royal interests and patronage at the fair was reported in detail each year in the *PGGTR* Queen Mary (Queen Consort to George V) was a regular visitor to the BIF, usually accompanied by the then Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of York. There was substantial coverage of the BIF in *PGGTR* in 1934 as evidenced by my account of the reportage of the Keith Murray glass in this section. In 1935 it was not so extensively reported on because of the coverage of the *British Art in Industry* Exhibition which will be discussed in detail later. However during the BIF of 1936, the new King Edward VIII himself visited the fair where out of all the glass manufacturers displaying there he selected James Powell and Sons and Stevens & Williams for a personal visit.

[128] She attended in the capacity of unofficial patron for the industrial arts; a role fashioned for the Royal family by Prince Albert, Consort to Queen Victoria.

[129] A well-documented example (but by no means the earliest), is the first Josiah Wedgwood's cultivation of aristocratic patronage, especially that of Catherine the Great of Russia, for whom he made the famous 'Frog' service in 1773 – 4. That 952-piece dinner service was publicly exhibited in London prior to its dispatch to Russia and subsequently mentioned in Wedgwood's advertising. Whilst it was the fine artistry of the decoration of each piece (the service featured 1244 different English views) that was flagged in the publicity, it was the aristocratic endorsement of Wedgwood's improved earthenware body that was especially valuable for the firm. Following on from the public Wedgwood's new 'creamware' became rapidly accepted as a fine and fashionable product in a growing market, which had hitherto aspired to owning (but could not necessarily afford to purchase) more expensive porcelain crockery. Royal endorsement was reflected in the renaming of creamware as Queensware by Wedgwood, in honour of Queen Charlotte, the British Queen Consort, who was said to admire the refined body. See George Savage and Harold Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Ceramics*, Thames & Hudson, 1974 and Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire*, op.cit.

royal patronage was still perceived to be highly beneficial to manufacturers (and a potential means of obtaining free publicity). There are also indications that it helped to promote the work of more innovative designers of ceramics and glass, especially Susie Cooper and Keith Murray.[130] For example, it was noted that the young Duchess of York ordered items from the Susie Cooper stand amongst her other purchases at the BIF in 1934.[131] These, the reporter commented, were to add to a set of Susie Cooper plates she had previously purchased.[132] Such reportage of Princess Elizabeth's purchases at the BIF indicate that she was considered to be a beneficial influence on the tastes of the younger generation of consumers with regards to promoting contemporary British design.[133] The cultivation of the popular Princess's public image as a discerning advocate of contemporary design for the home was appropriate given her young married status and her potential as a role model for the millions of young couples engaged in buying their own homes in the inter-war period.[134]

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[130] A royal 'purchase' (more often than not a 'selection' rather than a fiscal transaction) on the stand was considered a great honour and brought with it excellent publicity for the firm.

[131] The Duchess of York, Princess Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, became Queen Consort when her husband (Queen Mary's son), George VI was crowned King after the abdication of his brother, Edward VIII in 1936. Her formal role after the death of her husband and until her death in 2002 was as Queen Mother to Elizabeth II.

[132] Staff reporter, 'Buyers Notes', *PGGTR* , May 1933 p583

[133] She had become associated with contemporary design events through representing the Royal Family at the opening of the Swedish Exhibition in 1931.Contemporary press photographs showed her receiving the 'Cactus House' bowl designed by Edward Hald at the official opening.

[134] The expansion of home ownership was a phenomenon of the inter-war period in Britain. Between 1919 and 1939 over four million new houses were built, mainly in the suburbs of towns and cities. The building boom, which accelerated in the 1930s, mainly applied to the commercial sector whose typical products were 'developments' of small detached and semi-detached houses. Those houses were marketed to young upper working class and middle class couples and were paid for largely with mortgages. This expansion in home ownership created a demand for furniture and domestic accessories suited to the new style of housing. See Adrian Forty et al. 'Housebuilding Between the Wars', *History of Architecture & Design, 1890 – 1939: Unit 2 The Electric Home*, Open University, Milton Keynes, 1975, pp. 42 – 44.
It was this younger and less wealthy market that frequently relied upon mass produced items, that was the target of design reform activities in the 1930s. Although there was no likelihood of young Royals like the Duke and Duchess of York living in such a home, there was a public perception of them as a 'typical' modern family rather than fairytale Prince and Princess. The Duchess's purchases of well-designed and inexpensive British products (rather than expensive luxury goods) as reported in the trade press, cultivated an image of a modern but patriotic Royal

Although the discourse concerning royal interest in the Keith Murray glass is characterised by its genteel but nonetheless patronising tone, closer analysis of the exchange between the Royal patron and Modernist designer suggests a shared didactical agenda. [135] Indeed both parties seem to have been well briefed with regard to articulating (and assuaging) certain popular misgivings about Modernist design as indicated in this extract from the *PGGTR* reportage:

> 'The Queen and the Duchess of York visited the stand, and her Majesty was obviously particularly interested in some of the new designs, which are the result of the efforts of Mr Keith Murray. "I suppose those are rather expensive?" the Queen remarked when examining some of these new pieces, but an assurance was promptly forthcoming that this was not the case. ... the Queen made a purchase of a sapphire blue bowl, designed by Mr Keith Murray, and the Duchess of York purchased some pieces in black and flint crystal executed in a modern design.'[136]

The questioner inferred that Modernist design was sophisticated and likely to be expensive, especially if made by a manufacturer of luxury goods. The response and subsequent purchase of a number of pieces showed that to be a misconception. An alternative 'message' compatible with design reform ethics was thus propositioned: the unfussy styling of Modernist goods made them easier to manufacture and generally more affordable. The report was accompanied by a photograph of three Keith Murray sherry sets, which indicated, albeit obliquely, the shift away from formal entertaining towards modern trends in socialising at home in the inter-war period. Thus the purchases made by the Duchess of York confirmed their fashionable appeal to younger consumers, for whom she was assumed to be a role model.

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family and prompted manufacturers and retailers not to disregard the potential of that new market for domestic products.

[135] The obsequious tone of much of the reportage of royal purchases at the BIF indicates the persistence of that tradition in inter-war Britain and that the glass and ceramics trades were gratified by royal attention.

[136] Unnamed correspondent, *PGGTR* 'Pottery and Glass at the BIF', April 2 1934, p 467.

Analysis of more conventional discourse in the trade journal revealed a focus on new lines and novelties, as might be expected. That was also beneficial to those firms who showed 'modern' lines at the *BIF* in terms of attracting free publicity via the *PGGTR* correspondents. For example, new lines from Stevens & Williams were given advance publicity before the 1934 BIF. [137] Buyer's were alerted to firm's experiments with undecorated coloured glass:

> '...particularly a new violet tinted glass seen to advantage in a series of bathroom sets consisting of powder bowl, bath-salt jar and a couple of toilet bottles. The same sets will be offered in various colourings, flashed upon flint.'[138]

Although *PGGTR* was disposed to discussing new directions in design and even flagged new products related to contemporary lifestyles, it generally did not engage with broader issues relating to the modernisation of the ceramics and glass industries or with significant changes in lifestyles and consumption that were affecting trade.[139] Its vision was also parochial and rarely extended to international examples of glass or ceramics. For the *PGGTR,* as for Stevens & Williams, 'modern' glass design was treated as a low-key affair. It was discussed in terms of vague stylistic trends and commercial reflexivity, never in terms of a more programmatic approach. In that respect, it concurred with the outlook of the traditional side of the British glass industry.

Retailers of Modernist glass

The market for Modernist glass was still limited to a dozen or so outlets mainly in London and the Home Counties, such as Fortnum & Mason, Heal & Son,

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[137] The reportage of the fair was protracted over several months and included previews as well as reviews.

[138] 'Some Notes on the Exhibits' , *PGGTR* Feb 1 1934, pp 222 –225. In this example, the designer was not mentioned, although I am certain that the reference was to Keith Murray's designs as the firm's pattern book shows coloured bathroom sets amongst items designed by Keith Murray c 1933 -4.

[139] There are some exceptions relating to articles about both ceramics and glass design that are mentioned and/or discussed in Chapter Four.

Dunns of Bromley, The Medici Society and Bowman Brothers of Camden Town. There were a few design-conscious stores outside the London area, which took the 'Keith Murray' glass, including the Gordon Russell showrooms in Broadway, Lee Longlands of Birmingham, Barrow's Stores, Birmingham and Marshall and Snelgroves of Leicester. Both Reginald Williams-Thomas and Murray were responsible for cultivating interest in the firm's designer lines amongst its design conscious retailers, especially in the London area.

Those retailers who sold Keith Murray glass did so because they were already committed to Modernist design and had a design conscious clientele. Outside of that design-conscious 'niche' market, the firm's sales representatives encountered problems in selling 'modern' and traditional lines together.[140] For example when an appointed trade buyer decided to purchase Keith Murray glass from Stevens & Williams, orders for more conventional glass for that store would frequently be placed with the firm's competitors.[141] Given that traditional cut glass was considered to be the firm's staple product, it is understandable that there was resentment amongst its sales and production employees at having to carry low-volume Modernist designs.

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[140] The firm's former Sales Director, Gilbert Hill, related the account that follows of typical sales methods at Stevens & Williams in the 1930s, to me. His recollections of working for the firm as a Salesman in the 1930s were particularly useful for this study because he had undertaken his own analysis of sales and affective factors as part of his work. Although they were not recorded, his views were thus well-informed and help to illuminate the problem of selling both modern and traditional ranges from a commercial perspective. Op.cit. Appendix IV.

[141] Hill recalled from his experience that, apart from a very few design conscious stores that stocked mainly modern glass, most orders for Keith Murray glass would be tentative ones limited to a few items in order to test customer demand for modern lines. The same store was likely to place a more substantial order for conventional cut crystal table glass, decanters, bowls and vases with one's competitors. If the Modern glass proved difficult to sell there was little likelihood of a repeat order the next time and the store would be committed to another manufacturer's range of traditional glass. Op.cit. Interview (Appendix IV). It is not possible to ascertain whether and to what extent that experience was typical in the trade as a whole at that time. However, I have no reason to believe that Major Hill, who prided himself on his self-tutored analysis of sales, was painting a false picture of the sales environment he experienced in the early 1930s.

Similar misgivings about internal competition were rarely articulated in any broad or public forum, which is unfortunate because they were informed by the actualities of material production and consumption patterns and were fraught with complexities. This detailed analysis has exposed the dichotomy of an unmodernised and conservative industry on the one hand and Modernist idealism on the other which circumscribed Murray's praxis as a designer of glass.

Part Three: The Keith Murray Glass (c 1932 – 1939)

In this final part the broad stylistic and typological variations encompassed in the Keith Murray glass are established and analysed in the context of Murray's working relationship with Stevens & Williams. It examines how Murray utilised .the various shape-making and decorating methods which he encountered during the seven or so years in which he was employed as a freelance designer. For the purpose of that analysis the Keith Murray glass is assigned to four stylistic categories: i) Modernist versions of traditional forms; ii) plain (i.e. undecorated) white and coloured glass; iii) Modern decorated (Modernist and modernistic versions of decorated glass) and iv) 'specials' (including commemorative pieces and commissioned work). The stylistic variations found in all four categories are analysed and where possible, accounted for in terms of specific influences in Chapter Five of this thesis and (where relevant) compared with examples of his work in other media.

Modernist versions of traditional 'Old English' forms and patterns

Murray's aim in turning to glass design was to give '...modern expression' to traditional British glass.[142] As a keen collector of 'Old English' drinking glasses (which he defined as English and Irish lead glass made before 1850) it was his deep appreciation of the qualities of Georgian and Regency lead glass (and a revulsion against cut and engraved glass from the era of High Victorian taste), that had first inspired him to contemplate Modernist versions.[143] Amongst his

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[142].Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', op. cit p 53. He recalled how that had started after seeing contemporary glass on display at the Paris exhibition of 1925.

[143] Murray applied the term 'Old English' in the generic manner common with collectors and decorative arts specialists to describe both British and Irish lead glass of the 18th and early 19th centuries. It was called English glass because the lead glass metal was developed in London by George Ravenscroft in the late 17th century and many of the stylistic conventions associated with 'lead crystal' or 'flint' glass originated in the English glass houses that used the new metal. Another common generic term ascribed to British glass of that era is 'Georgian' glass, which acknowledges the high standards of glass making and decoration that had developed by the eighteenth century. In the second half of the eighteenth century lead glass making was exported to Ireland, where the traditions associated with English cut and engraved lead glass were taken up and developed in firms such as Waterford. It was the massive forms and deep cutting styles associated with Waterford glass that Murray most admired

earliest designs for Stevens & Williams was Modernist interpretations based on simplified versions of traditional forms although Murray's reputation as a Modernist has tended to obscure his experimentation with traditional shapes and patterns, especially with regard to glass.

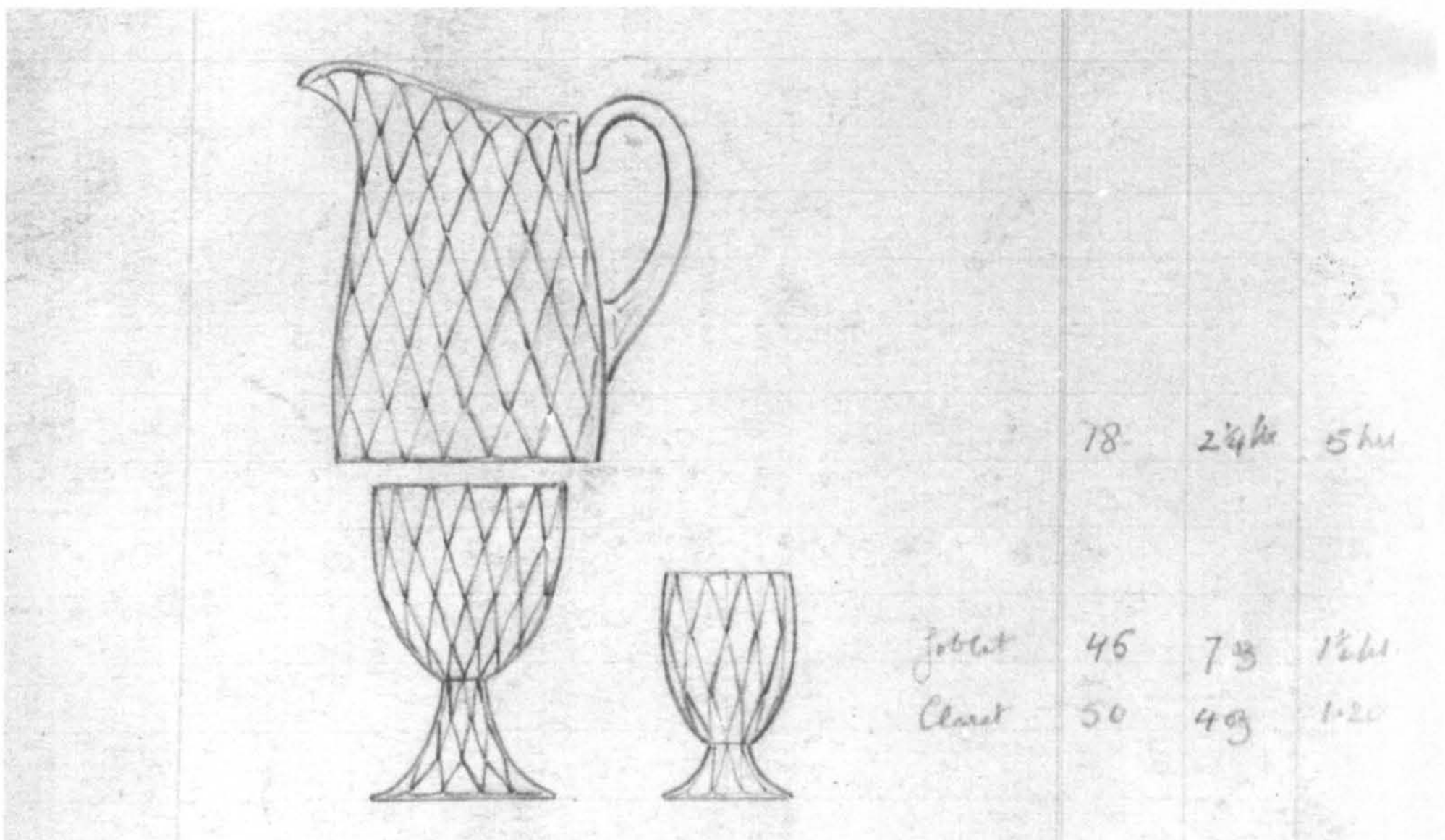

Fig 2:2

Page from the KMD Book showing a jug and matching goblet and claret glass, 274A, designed c.1933

Working with the skilled glass blowers at Stevens & Williams, Murray adapted some of the firm's oldest shapes for items such as jugs, urns and candlesticks.[144] Those sturdy forms were suited to simple and vigorous styles of decoration especially wheel cutting in broad flutes or flat cut patterns. Some, such as the jug and goblet with an all-over flat cut diaper pattern, (see Fig 2:2) harked back to vernacular prototypes whilst others including decanters and two handled urns

[144] Sam Thompson recalled that Murray made use of some traditional shapes. It is quite likely that Murray would have utilised existing moulds for certain forms or optical finishes such as 'wrythen' which gives a twisted effect to the metal, if they were suited to his design.

had more specific classical references.[145] In both cases Murray was reworking traditional shapes and patterns that had been in production in British and Irish glass houses since the eighteenth century.[146] In the case of the jug (274A) a Modernist inflection was achieved by giving a more severe profile to a form that would have had a more flowing shape in original versions. Murray approved of old cutting patterns, such as the 'Dutch Diamond' used on this example, because unlike Victorian styles of all-over shallow prismatic cutting, flat-cutting preserved the translucency of the glass.[147] There was also an implication that the relationship between pattern and form was more harmonious than in 'fussy' Victorian styles of cut glass.

Plain (i.e. undecorated) white and coloured glass

Murray applied the same formal principles to more distinctly modern designs for the home as evident in the examples of undecorated glass shown in Fig 2:3 and Fig 2: 4. Consistent factors were the generously-sized shapes, precise profiles and translucency of the metal, whether white or coloured. His plain forms however, tended to be less massive (i.e. they were lighter in weight and had thinner walls) than their 'traditional' counterparts and were generally less expensive than equivalent designs with cut and/or engraved decoration. The examples here show both coloured and contrasting coloured variations applied to vases and bowls.[148] Note especially the use of contrasting 'crystal' (white) and black metal in the tall vase and bowl visible in the centre of Fig 2:3. That

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[145] The example shows a jug and matching goblet and claret glass, 274A designed c.1933. The jug was heavy (weighing 2 _ lbs) and therefore thick-walled. The 'flat diaper' or 'reverse diamond ' or 'Dutch Diamond' pattern as it was variously known, took five hours to cut.

[146] Examples of both versions of 'traditional' are illustrated and discussed in Chapter Five, (see Case Study I:A).

[147]. Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass' op. cit, p 54

[148] The tall vase (445A) was 30cms tall and made in crystal (i.e leaded glass) with a contrasting foot (added and shaped in the glass house by the glass blowers) in black glass. The matching bowl (439A) cost 15s. and the vase 13s. (75p and 65p respectively). They were designed c. 1934.

combination was made fashionable in the late 1920s and early 1930s by the Swedish glass designers, Simon Gate and Edward Hald at Orrefors

Fig 2:3

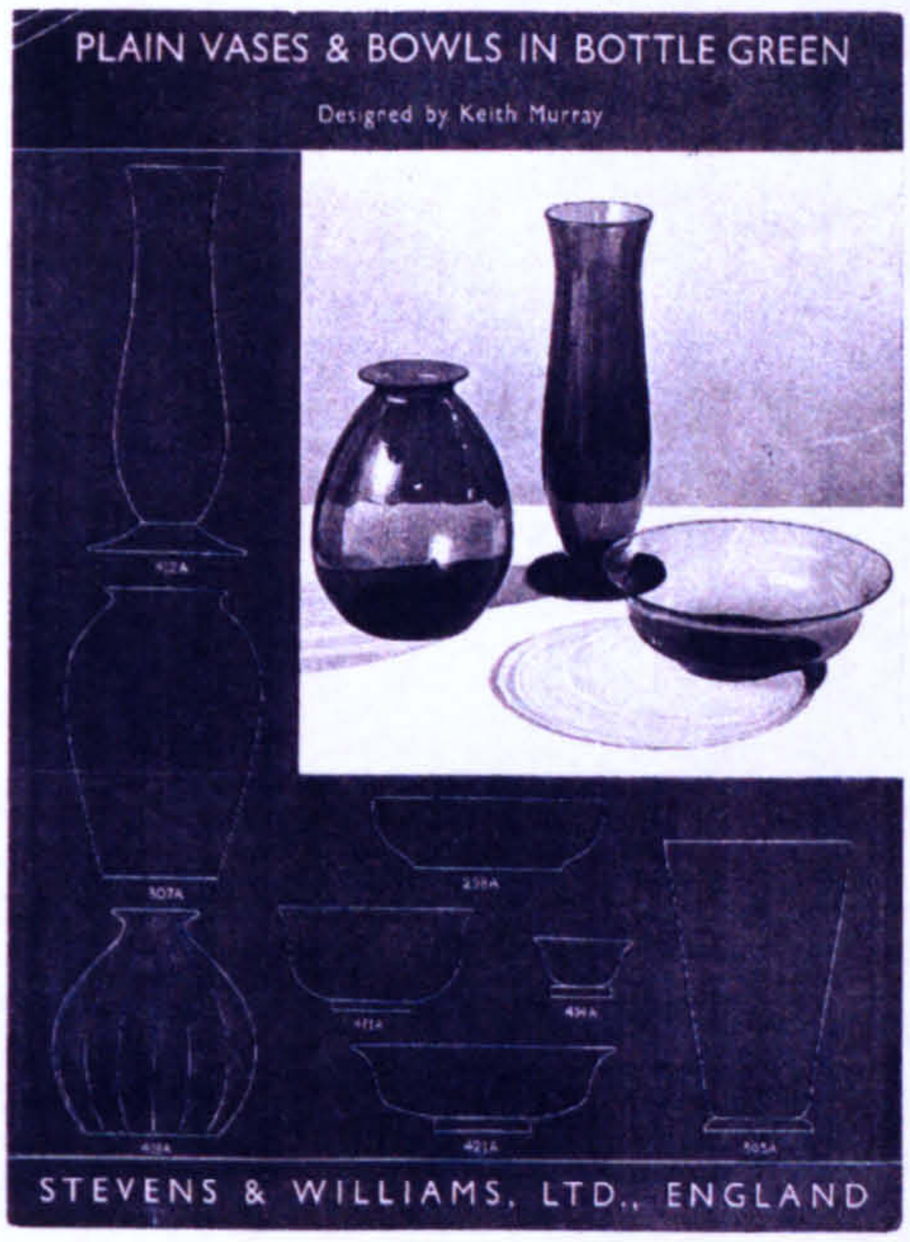

Fig 2:4

Two pages of Keith Murray's designs for 'plain' glass from a brochure, c. 1935, promoting Stevens & Williams' 'modern' glass ranges

Murray's large repertoire of Modernist designs for Stevens & Williams shows the extent to which he became influenced by contemporary Swedish glass design, especially in his use of coloured and contrasting-coloured metals and above all, in his preference for simplicity of form and decoration. (This is analysed and discussed in Chapter 5).[149] The most challenging aspect of that influence, from Stevens & Williams' perspective is manifest in the entirely plain bowls and vases, shown in this example in Bottle Green. (Fig 2:4) [150]

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[149] Murray, began to be aware of innovations in contemporary examples of European and Scandinavian glass after seeing exhibits in Paris in 1925. The glass exhibits he saw at the Swedish exhibition in London in 1931 convinced him to try his hand at designing modern forms of table glass for factory production.

[150] The three pieces in the photographic inset: tall footed vase (412A); lily bowl (421A0; and Venetian waved flower vase (419A) all date from c. 1934. They were made in bottle green glass and ranged in price from 4s. (20p), for a small nut bowl to 17s. (85p), for the 16 inch (40cms) vase.

Indeed the firm was deeply ambivalent to Murray's more wholesale adoption of the Swedish Modern approach which included inexpensive plain glass as well as decorative work of a high artistic quality.[151] Despite those misgivings, Murray's philosophy of simplicity in glass design is manifest in these examples in their clean lines and lack of applied decoration or decorative effects.[152] The pieces were mainly blown by hand and finished in the glass house. Some of the bowls had an applied foot in contrasting metal and some pieces had a ribbed effect in the metal achieved by blowing the first gather into a patterned mould.[153] They were also amongst the least expensive of Murray's designs for home accessories and thus came closer to his Modernist ideals.

Modern decorated

This category of Modern decorated comprised the largest number of his designs for glass and encompassed several stylistic variations of both the Modern and the moderne. The principal decorative approaches in Murray's decorated glass that I have identified for the purpose of research are: Modernist traditional (as discussed above); Keith Murray machine aesthetic; modernistic and moderne; and (influence of) Modern Swedish.[154] It has been established that the

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[151] Although Stevens & Williams would have understood and approved of the rationale of a designer copying or making variations on fashionable decorative glass made by a rival factory (whether British or foreign), they were wedded to the idea that decoration was a mark of quality in hand made glass. The ambivalence towards Swedish-inspired plain glass is explicit in Major Hill's assertions that Murray's undecorated designs were not suited to English lead crystal.

[152] Bottle Green was a colour associated with Stevens & Williams' earliest productions. It was of a different composition to the firm's lead crystal and was thus more suited to plain designs. Imperfections and bubbles were also more difficult to see in a dark coloured metal. However, there was still resistance to it at the firm because it detracted from its reputation for high quality cut and engraved lead crystal.

[153] That method was called 'dip moulding' as the final form was free blown leaving an impressed pattern or texture on the surface of the vessel. It was an old glass-house technique and had been retained in traditional glass houses.

[154] See my discussion of those categories in Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray;' op. cit. *British Design between the Wars,* pp34-35. Note the category that I have referred to above as 'Modernistic and Moderne', was listed as 'Art Deco' in the catalogue. Although I have arrived at these stylistic categories through my analysis of Murray's designs for glass, they apply equally

motivating factor to expand the decorative part of his repertoire was to keep trained decorators in work so the range of approaches discussed below focuses on decorating techniques for which he made designs, especially cutting, acid etching, intaglio, engraving, enamelling and threading.

Despite his preference for plain glass, Murray had a simple philosophy for decoration on glass, i.e. that it should enhance form and that wheel-cutting, if used, should not destroy the clarity of glass.[155] The examples discussed above indicated how Murray interpreted that philosophy in the case of traditional wheel-cutting styles for 'traditional' glass forms. He also created geometric patterns of cutting (especially bands of concentric incisions or flat cutting), appropriate to his Modernist glass forms as the examples of his machine aesthetic style shows. (See Fig 2:5)[156]

Murray's machine aesthetic style embodied a harmony between geometric form and a geometric style of decoration, as exemplified in these bowls with wheel-cut concentric grooves around the circumference. A small number of designs show that Murray later pursued the machine aesthetic effect using less hand-intensive methods, as in the case of the vase in Fig 2:6, which is acid-etched. The machine aesthetic idiom (as designated in this study) is restricted to designs where form and decoration conform to a mechanistic geometry; so it is not appropriate to apply it to designs consisting of patterns of abstract motifs as in the examples shown in Fig 2: 7.

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to his designs in ceramics and in a more restrictive sense to his designs in silver (namely *Keith Murray Machine Aesthetic, Modern Traditional* and *Modern Swedish*).

[155] Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', op. cit. p 54

[156] See Chapter One, Part I for my explanation and definition of this term..

Keith Murray Machine Aesthetic[157]

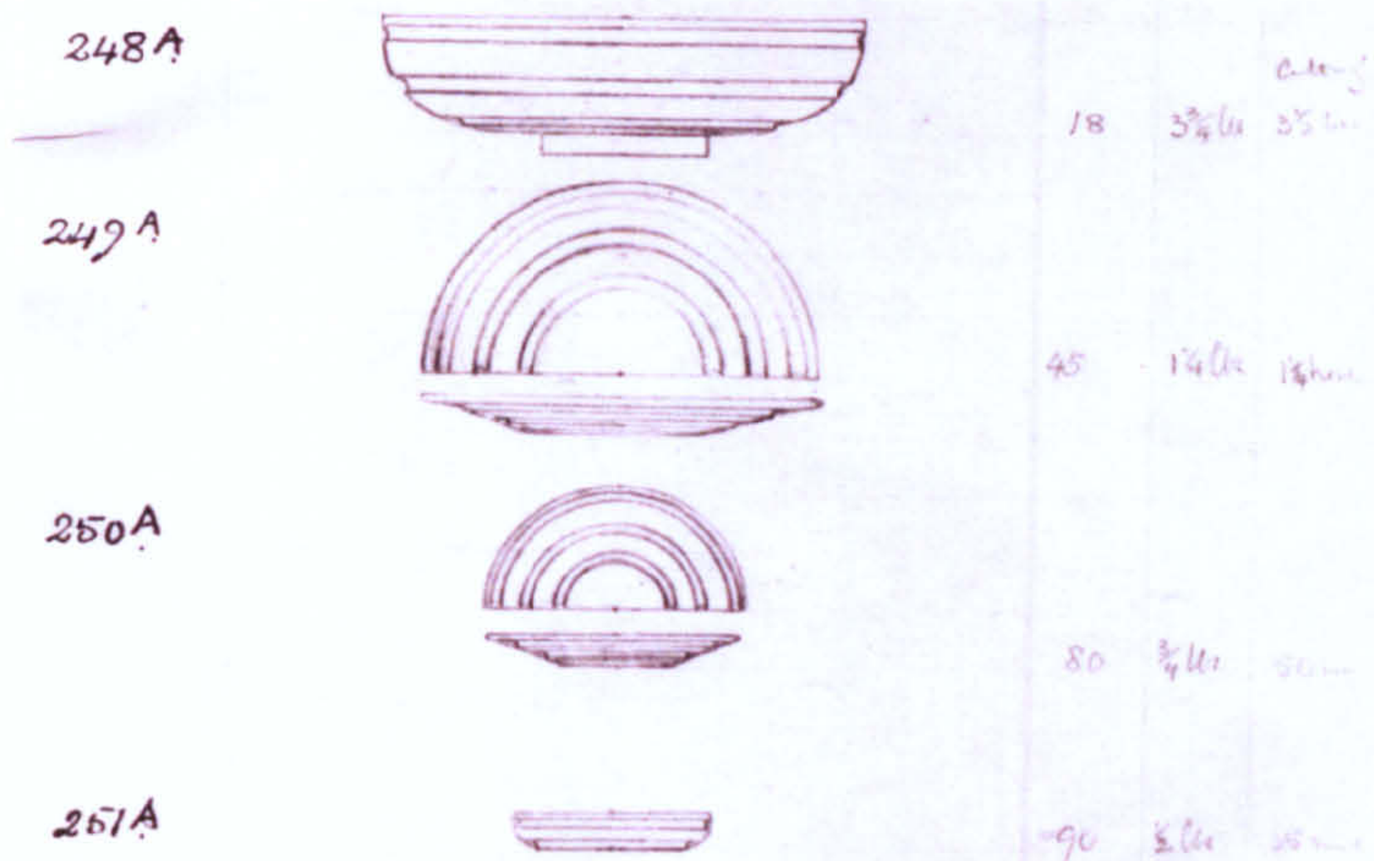

Fig 2:5

Page from the KMD Book showing four shallow bowls: 248A with stuck-on foot, 249A, 250A and 251A, all free-blown, designed c.1933.

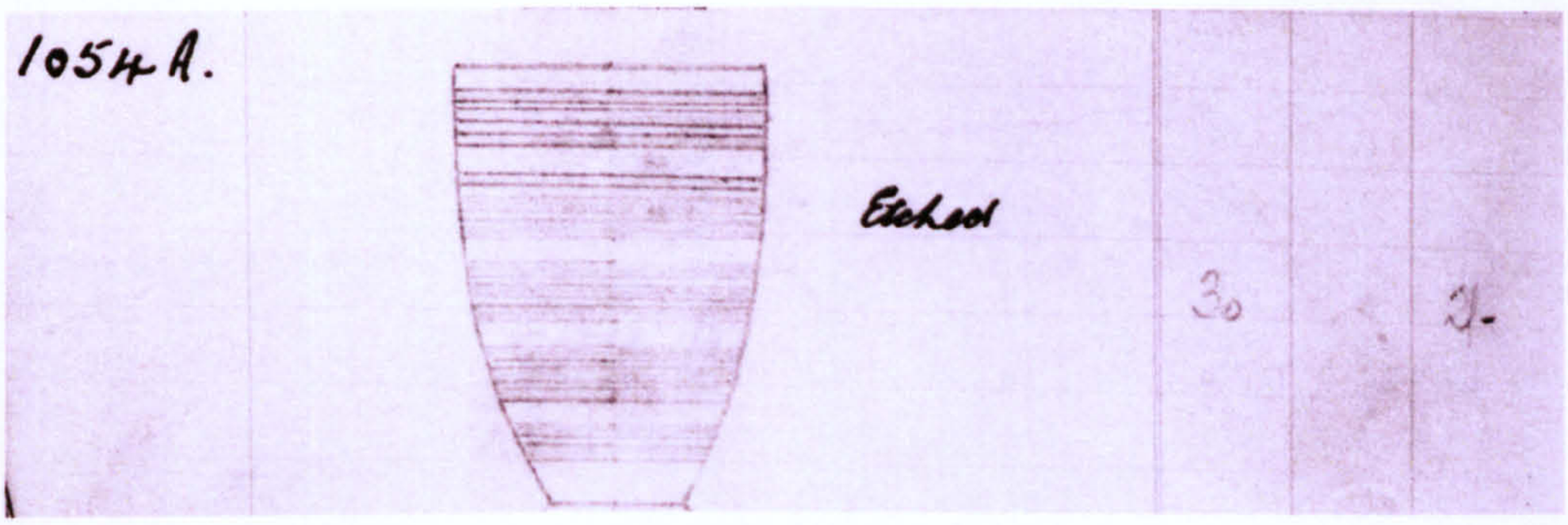

Fig 2:6

Page from the KMD Book showing vase 1054A decorated with regularly-spaced bands of acid etched lines, designed c.1939.

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[157] '*Keith Murray Machine Aesthetic;* in this category I would include the most severe designs for cut glass, characterised by the emphasis on geometric form and the mechanistic nature of the cutting – usually in deep concentric bands or broad, flat flutes. I would also include Murray's designs for tall straight vases with bands of acid etched decoration.' Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray;' op. cit. *British Design between the Wars,* p.35.

Modernistic, Jazz Modern and Moderne (Art Deco)[158]

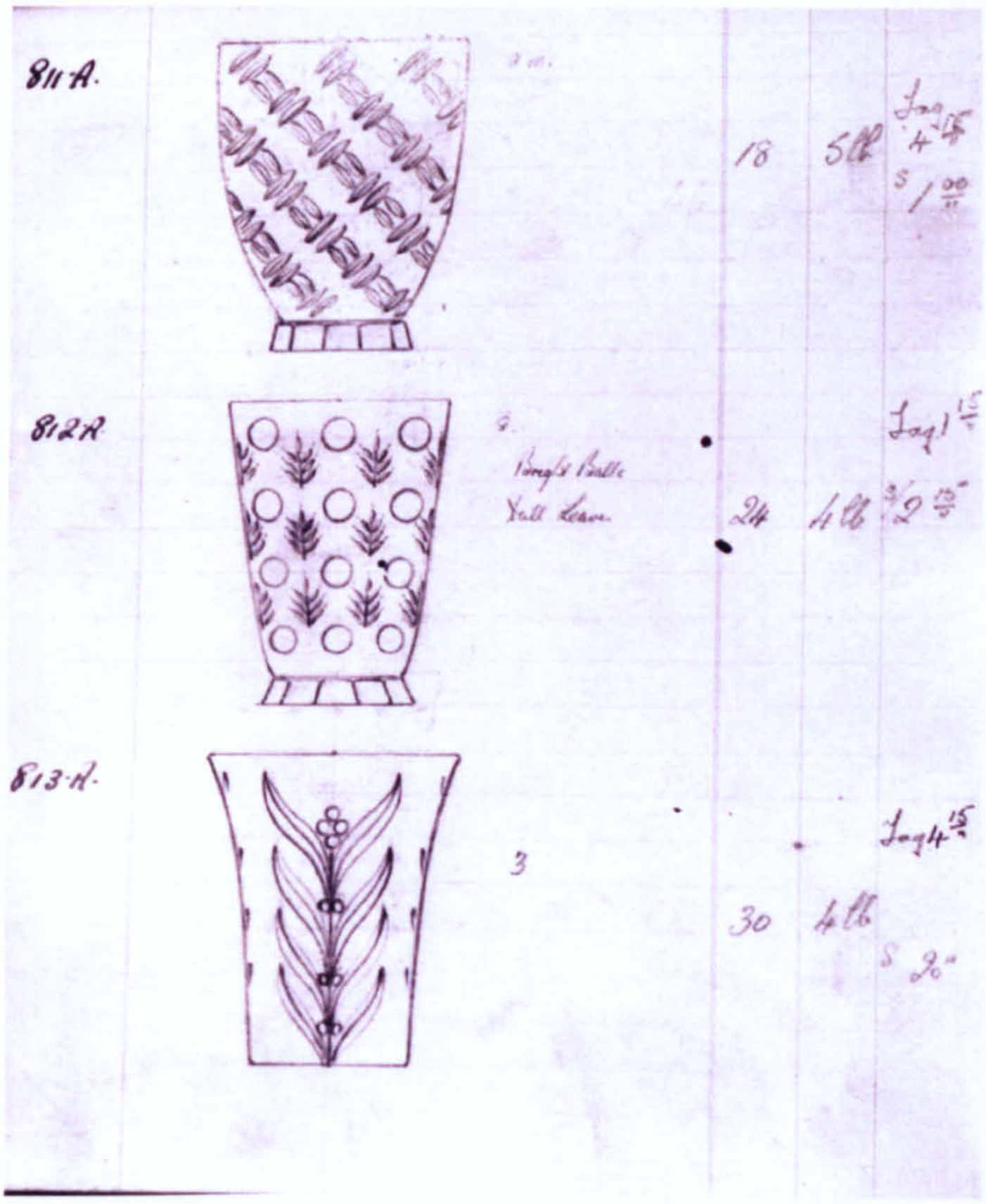

Fig 2:7

Page from the KMD Book showing vases 811A, 812A and 813A decorated with intaglio engraving, designed c.1936.

These more elaborated decorative pieces, such as the vase at the top of the page (design no.811A), exemplify modernistic design.[159] All three vases shown in the illustration are examples of intaglio cutting or engraving, a decorating technique which is something of a halfway house between wheel cutting and copper-

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[158] These are the equivalent to the category *Art Deco,* which I explained '...share the same concern for modern, stylised decoration, quality materials and fine craftsmanship, which characterised the 'Art Deco' designs of the 1920s. ...I would ...limit this category to those pieces where the decoration is of a distinctly modernistic or 'jazz modern' nature such as the enamelled decanters and many of the decorative designs in cut and engraved patterns for ornamental wares.' Diane Taylor, Op. cit 'Keith Murray;' *British Design between the Wars,* p.35.

[159] See also Chapter One, Part I for my definition of stylistic terms.

wheel engraving.[160] Design no.811A has a diagonal pattern of stylised abstract motifs comprising of deep faceted ovoid hollows which exploits the three-dimensional qualities associated with intaglio-cutting. The combination of the bold, bright intaglio cutting and the rhythmic pattern contribute to a dynamic effect to which Pevsner, Farr and others may well have assigned the stylistic term 'jazz modern'.[161] 'Jazz modern' also implied the use of certain striking colour combinations as exemplified in these decanters with stylised enamel painting designed by Murray c 1932, (see Fig 2: 8)

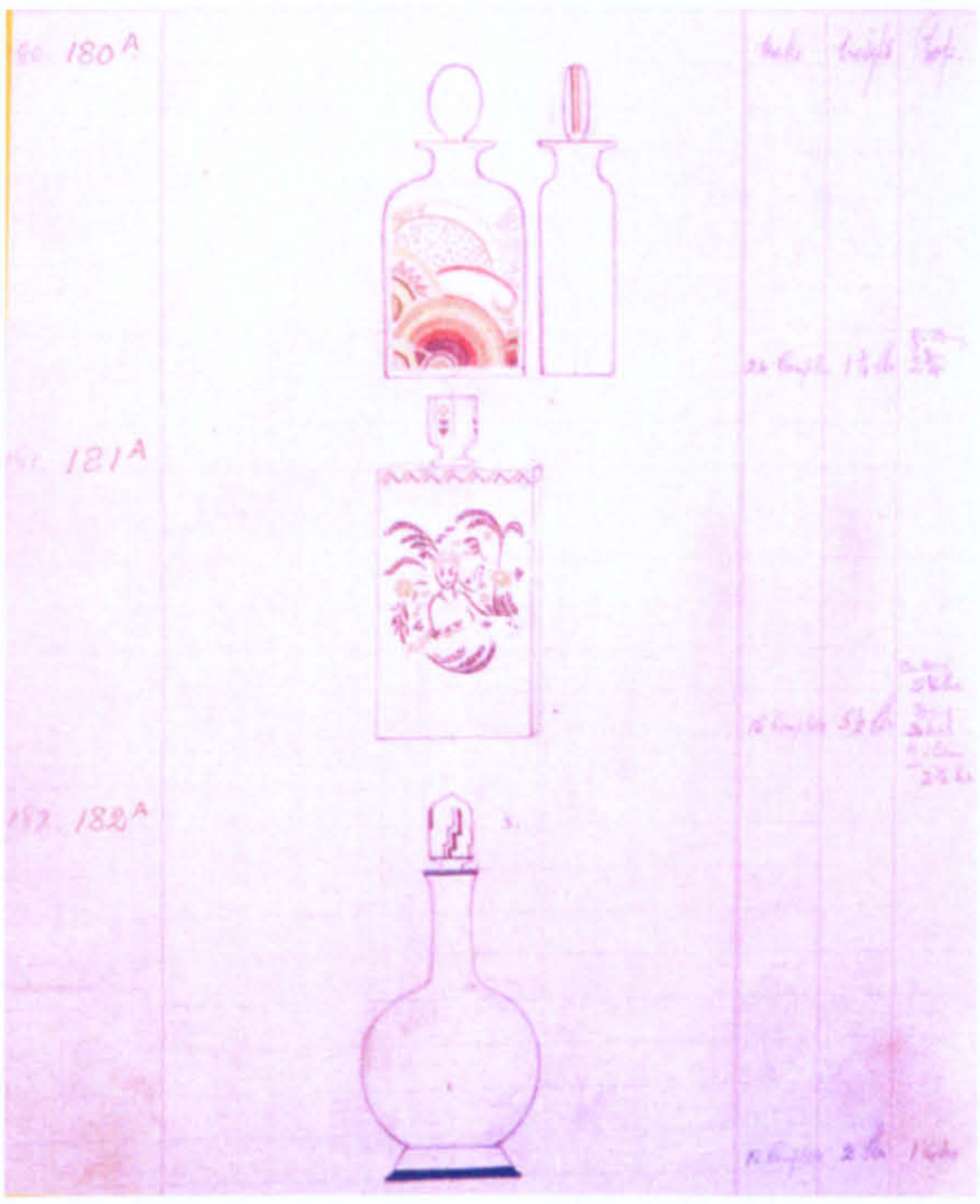

Fig 2:8

Page from the KMD Book showing gilded and enamelled decanters (design nos. 180A, 181A, and 182A), c 1932.

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[160] Intaglio cutting was invented at Stevens & Williams in 1890. It uses stone wheels (although they are much smaller than conventional cutting wheels) so it is suited to the thicker, softer lead crystal glass. The intaglio cutter holds the object beneath the wheel to decorate it, as with copper wheel engraving. That allows for the more freehand effect associated with engraved decoration but intaglio cutting is much deeper than surface engraving. The pattern or motif appears below the surface of the glass and is three dimensional in effect. Intaglio cutting or engraving is bright polished to enhance the sculpted effect.

[161] As discussed in Chapter One, Part 1.

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Moderne was not an ornamented style as such but relied for its effects on sleekness of form, the lustrous quality of surface finish and sophistication of colours and materials.[162] Several of Murray's designs fit into that category such as these threaded toilet sets in clear crystal with contrasting threads of jewel-coloured glass applied in the glass house, (see Fig 2:9). Stylistic analysis of these designs and other examples in this study has also indicated the extent to which Murray was influenced by contemporary Swedish glass.

Fig 2: 9

Page showing Keith Murray's designs for 'toilet sets' from a brochure, c. 1935, promoting Stevens & Williams' 'modern' glass ranges

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[162] See my discussion of this term in Chapter One, Part 1.

(Influence of) Modern Swedish[163]

Fig 2:10

Keith Murray vase with engraved floral decoration designed c. 1932

Research has shown that Murray drew upon Swedish approaches to both plain and decorative glassware.[164] With regard to the latter, that influence extended to

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[163] I have included under *Modern Swedish* '...engraved glass with motifs such as swimming fish and cacti....' (as well as plain and coloured undecorated glass and two-coloured glass). Diane Taylor, Op. cit 'Keith Murray;' *British Design between the Wars,* p.35.

[164] See Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray Modern Glass: the Swedish Connection', op.cit.

both technique and style as exemplified in this design for Modern engraved glass, (see Fig. 2: 10). The bowl with an all-over engraved motif (a small stylised flower) and a geometric pattern engraved as a frieze around the rim is typical of a lighter style of engraving that Gate and Hald made popular at Orrfors in the 1920s.[165] That style, which employed small lightly engraved motifs (inspired by the National Romantic Movement in the Decorative Arts in Sweden) did not require the finest standards of craftsmanship that were needed for the elaborate pictorial designs for which Orrefors earned its international reputation in the1920s.[166] Murray's version was practically suited to English lead crystal because all-over patterns usefully disguised flaws and imperfections in the metal. However, his all-over engraved pieces lacked the lightness of the Orrefors versions, the forms of which were made of soda glass and were therefore thinner-walled and more delicate.

Murray's most distinctive engraved designs were for large heavy pieces with more deeply engraved pictorial motifs often based on natural themes, such as underwater scenes with fish and trailing aquatic plants. The example below shows one of his most successful pictorial themes based on a cactus plant, (see Fig 2: 11) The cactus became a fashionable household plant in the early twentieth century and it was first used as a motif for engraved glass by Edward Hald in his famous bowl called 'Cactus House' designed in 1926.[167] Hald's

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[165] In 1918 Edward Hald designed two such patterns based on simple but stylised natural motifs: 'Wild Strawberry' and 'Night Sky' which remained in production throughout the 1920s. The key motifs; based upon a wild Swedish plant and the Northern Star were both associated with National Romantic themes which venerated natural history and Swedish folk history.

[166] The National Romantic spirit pervaded the architecture and the Decorative Arts in Sweden since the turn of the twentieth century. It can be seen partly as a reaction to the rapid transformation from a rural to an urban economy in the late 19th century and partly as an attempt to combine the traditional crafts with historical and mythical sources in order to develop a uniquely Swedish modern decorative form for the twentieth century. A monument to the National Romanticism in Sweden is the architecture, interior designs and decorative details of the Stockholm City Hall, designed by the Swedish architect, Ragnar Östberg (1866 -1945), and built between 1907 and 1923.

[167] It was known in Britain because it was displayed at the Swedish Exhibition in 1931. It attracted publicity because the bowl was presented to Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of York, at the official opening of the exhibition and was subsequently featured in the national press.

design was pictorial in concept and showed a fashionable young woman in a hot house surrounded by cacti in pots. Although Murray's designs using cactus plants as a motif may well have been inspired by the Swedish example, his treatment of the design was arguably very different. His use of the cactus motif was both sensitive and witty; he selected a different species to match the form of the vessel. For example a broad flat dish might have the design of a sprawling, flat leaved plant such as a Christmas cactus whereas a tall narrow vase would be decorated with a tall, columnar cactus. Thus the motifs were large scale and were cut or intaglio engraved to make a larger and more three-dimensional image in keeping with the heavy glass vessel.

Fig 2:11

Murray vase with engraved cactus decoration designed c. 1935

'Specials'

Designing patterns, motifs and pictorial designs proved to be most the most testing aspect for Murray as a designer of glass. During his time at Stevens & Williams there were two Royal Coronations and Murray was expected to make decorative commemorative items for these.[168] The example below (see Fig. 2: 12) shows a range of coronation ware designed by Murray for the coronation of Edward VIII, ranging from a simple tankard (787A) to an elaborate punch bowl (789A) all with engraved decoration and inscriptions.

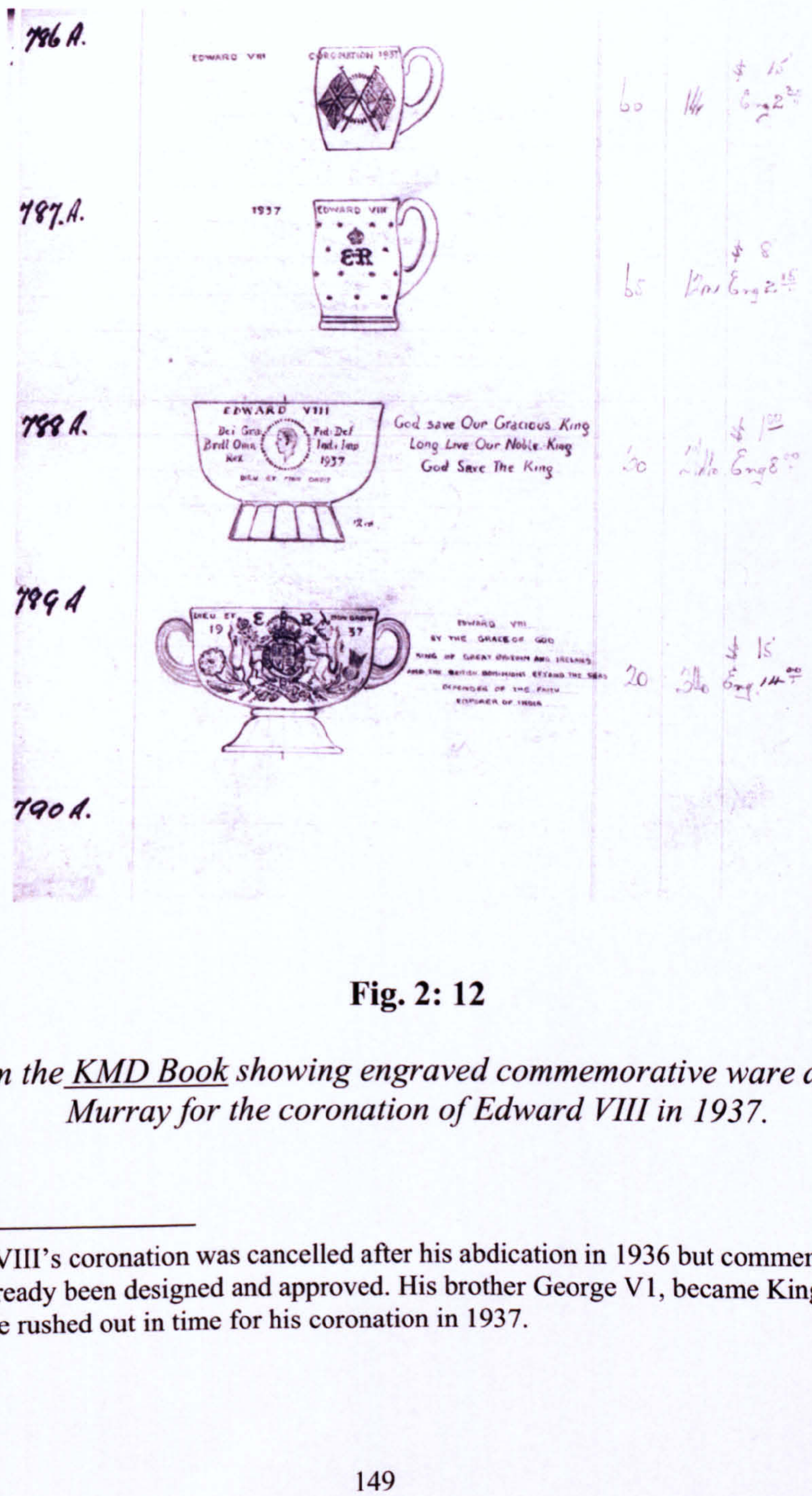

Fig. 2: 12

Page from the KMD Book showing engraved commemorative ware designed by Murray for the coronation of Edward VIII in 1937.

[168] Edward VIII's coronation was cancelled after his abdication in 1936 but commemorative ware had already been designed and approved. His brother George V1, became King and new designs were rushed out in time for his coronation in 1937.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the emphasis on traditional methods at Stevens & Williams was a significant challenge to Murray's conceptualisation of the role of the designer in industry and an important developmental factor in his design methodology. At Stevens & Williams he was confronted with the need a) to make a wide variety of designs to satisfy the trade's demand for novelty and breadth in the range; b) design certain lines as and when needed by the firm; c) modify his aesthetic preferences to take into account the material characteristics of lead glass and of traditional methods and d) expand his decorative repertoire for lead glass to conserve the employment of skilled decorators in the various workshops.

Analysis of the problems besetting the quality sector of the glass industry in which Stevens & Williams operated has revealed the complex set of factors that made it difficult to conceptualise, let alone capitalise any significant modernising of that sector of the British glass industry. During the time that Murray worked for the firm the lead glass industry generally experienced one of the worst slumps in its history and many skilled men were laid off or worked only a two-day week. Nevertheless, Stevens & Williams was the first to employ a modern designer for industry specifically to update the firm's ranges. In those particular circumstances, the outlay of about £250.00 per year in contracted fees to a freelance architect-turned-designer seems a substantial and even daring commitment to 'modern' design.

However, the union between a designer (Murray) who had ambitions to modernise glass design and a glass-manufacturing firm that specialised in traditional cut crystal was potentially fraught with conflict. There is evidence to suggest that it was problematic to sell both 'modern' and traditional lines together in some markets and it seems that the firm finally resolved those issues by reverting almost entirely to its traditional cut and engraved lead crystal lines.

There was a level, however at which the venture was successful. Out of it came a range of 'designer' glass suited to modern lifestyles and modern consumer culture and in that respect Murray achieved his ambition. From Stevens & Williams' perspective the experimental venture attracted positive publicity at a time when the luxury sector of the glass industry was in dire straits. They were not persuaded however, by Murray's more radical views about modernising both design and production and those differences ultimately caused a rift between them so that he ceased to work for the firm after the outbreak of the Second World War.

The impetus to expand production into Modernist ranges continued in the 1940s (after Murray's departure) when commercial production was resumed after World War Two. Staff designer Tom Jones created Modernist interpretations of decorated glass for the firm and was joined by a young female designer, Deanne Meanley, who had trained at the Royal College of Art.[169] Despite their efforts Stevens & Williams did not keep up with the more pervasive modernisation of glass design and production led by factories in Italy and Scandinavia, which managed more effectively to bridge the gap between inexpensive mass produced wares and more limited artistic items. The commitment to traditional cut crystal domestic glass prevailed and apart from a few sporadic experimental projects the firm's interest in Modernist sidelines petered out.[170]

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[169] Examples of designs by both Tom Jones (whose design career was interrupted by service in the Second World War) and Deanne Meanley were featured in the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition in 1946.

[170] See Lesley Jackson's concise account of the firm's history (and demise) in the twentieth century, op.cit. *20th Century Factory Glass*, pp. 196 – 198.

Chapter Three

An Historical and Contextual Account of Murray's Work for the Pottery Manufacturers, Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd .

Introduction

This chapter examines and evaluates Keith Murray's working relationship with the pottery manufacturers, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd. It is divided into three parts. Part One sets out the historical development and early 'modernisation' of the British ceramic industry, focussing on the role of Josiah Wedgwood I. It traces the history of Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. into the early twentieth century and critically evaluates the particular progressive strands of development originating from nineteenth century design discourses which shaped both the outlook and the design output of the firm up to the early 1930s. Part Two examines the problems besetting Wedgwood in the 1930s, a decade that saw fundamental changes to the firm. It analyses the efforts and plans associated with modernising its outlook and its production methods and examines the role that Murray played in bringing that about. The final section, Part Three, sets out Murray's working relationship with Wedgwood and analyses the range of designs that he made for the firm with particular reference to manufacturing methods, ceramic bodies and finishes. Developments during that time led to Murray's appointment as architect in charge of a proposed new plant for the mass production of tableware. That commission put his architectural career on a new and firmer footing and explains why he ultimately gave up industrial design

Part One: The British Ceramic Industry – its historical development and modernisation c 1760 - 1930.

Early industrialisation

The major difference between the domestic glass and ceramics manufacturing industries lies in their relative economic size and their demographics. In the period between the wars Britain (and particularly the Potteries region) was a net exporter of its domestic ceramic products as indicated by Graph 6, which shows exports of China and Porcelain plotted against imports of the same category and Graph 7, which shows the same in relation to earthenware imports and exports.[1] However, as previously explained in Chapter Two, it was a net importer of domestic glass.[2] Furthermore, the ceramics industry was geographically concentrated in the North Staffordshire area whereas glass manufacturing remained widely distributed throughout Britain and Ireland.[3] What emerged in the Potteries in the mid to late nineteenth century was a secondary phase of the Industrial Revolution as a model of intensive light manufacturing followed the older archetype of centralised and specialised heavy industrial production characteristic of the first phase. It is evident that the specialisation and centralisation of production that developed in the ceramic industry in the North Staffordshire region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries played a major part in the paradigm shift from vernacular to modern forms of production.[4]

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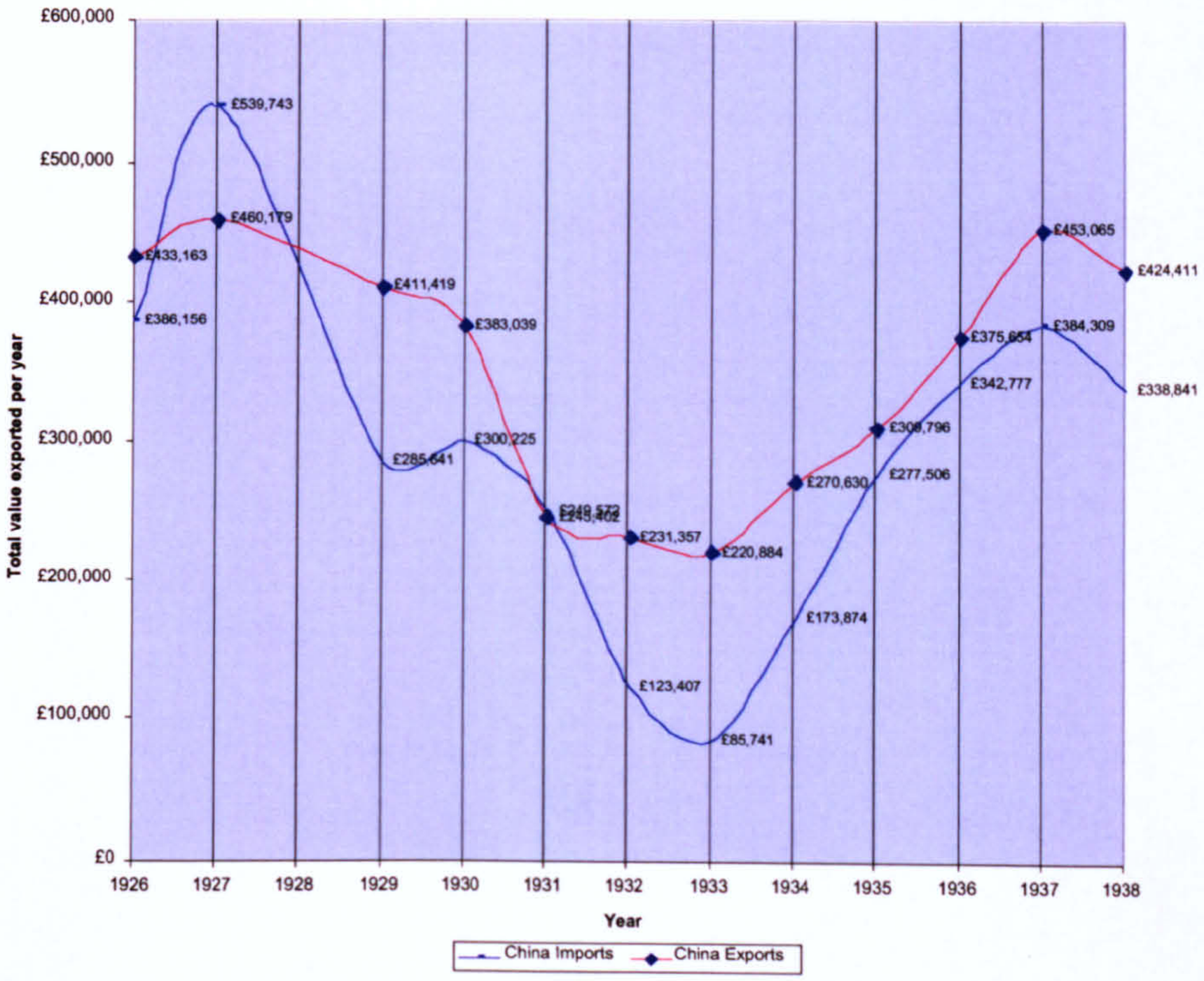
[1] The data for Graphs 6 - 8 is taken from the annually published tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' *The Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions). The individual graphs were compiled by extrapolating, tabulating and plotting specific data from those combined tables.

[2] Note that the tables in this chapter are compiled from the annually published table of "Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)" *The Pottery Gazette and Glass Trades Review,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

[3] Specialisation in the glass industry, as we have seen, tended to be regionalised as, for example, with lead crystal manufacture in the Black Country and bottle making in North Yorkshire.

[4] Forty explains how Josiah Wedgwood's innovations in designing, making and marketing ornamental and tableware demanded a new systematised style of manufacture that made many of the traditions and practices associated with craft-based production methods redundant. See Ch. 2 'The First Industrial Designers' in Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750 - 1980,* 1986, 29 – 41.

Graph 6: British Yearly Imports and Exports of China Pottery and Porcelain - by value (1926-1938)



Graph 6

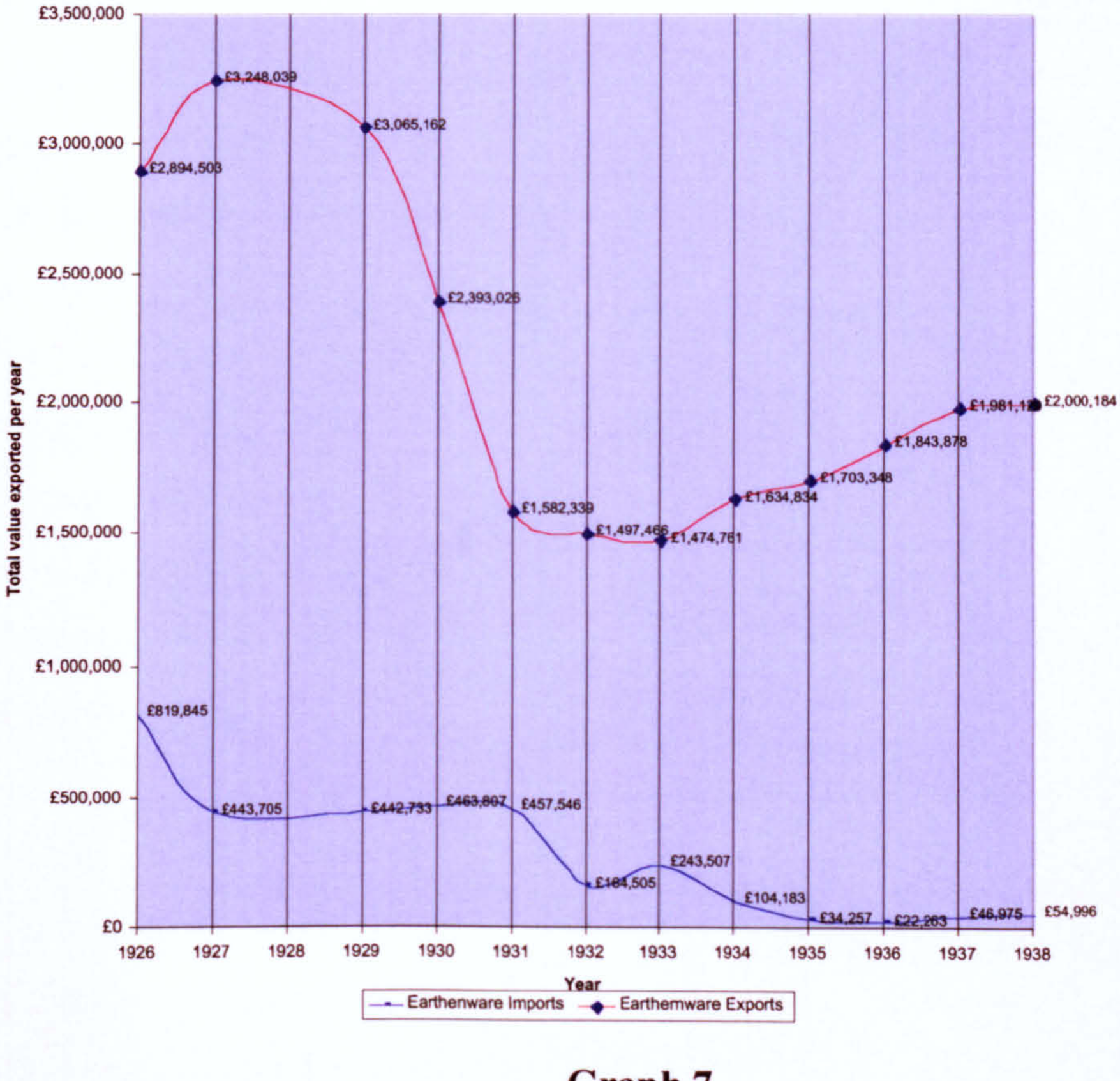
Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

Adrian Forty claims that the particular and historical model of industrialisation of ceramics manufacturing was primarily motivated by manufacturers' needs for greater consistency in quality and design than hitherto existed in traditional artisan methods of production. The same theory explains the parallel development of lead glass manufacturing in the Stourbridge area (and other regional centres in Britain and Ireland) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[5] In both cases it was the organisation of production (especially into

[5] Despite the parallel early adoption of factory methods in the glass industry, high quality lead glass manufacturing as practised in the Black Country remained a largely small-scale activity at

what is denoted as the factory system) that was key to the particular development of those industries rather than mechanisation *per se*.

Table 7: British Yearly Imports and Exports of Earthenware - by value (1926-1938)



Graph 7

Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

It is important to establish that distinction because in the Modernist discourse of the early twentieth century terms, factory production came to be equated with mechanisation, whereas in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth

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an interim stage of modernisation that retained handicraft skills in a factory setting. The reasons for that (and the different development pattern in other glass making centres, which did undertake industrialisation of production on a much larger scale) were discussed in Chapter One.

century the principal characteristics associated with factory manufacturer were the increasing division of production into a series of specialised processes enabling bulk production of standardised articles.

By the late nineteenth century industrialisation had transformed and centralised ceramic manufacturing in Britain. Production of ceramics in North Staffordshire had expanded and diversified both in terms of the types of goods manufactured and the scale and organisation of the firms that produced them. A classic example of this was Royal Doulton who moved from Lambeth (London) to Stoke-on-Trent in the nineteenth century and expanded production into a diverse range of products including tiles, sanitary ware, tableware, figurines and studio ceramics.[6] The twentieth century saw further diversification into technical products associated with modem industries including refractory goods for the electrical and wireless industries. Not only was Britain a net exporter of domestic ceramic goods, the Potteries was also a world-centre for ceramic manufacture.

Pre-industrialisation: Oriental porcelain - influence and archetype

Any account of the revolution in pottery manufacture experienced in Britain and other European centres in the nineteenth century should take into consideration the empirical outlook that had predisposed potters and ceramists to both technical and aesthetic innovations in their products over at least three centuries. Underpinning many of those changes was an enduring appreciation for the technical and aesthetic excellence of fine oriental ceramics, which motivated the more entrepreneurial manufacturers to either discover the secrets of fine porcelain, or to invent imitations.[7] Over the long term such empiricism

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[6] See Richard Dennis, *Doulton Pottery from the Lambeth & Burslem Studios, 1873 – 1939,* Dennis, London, 1975.

[7] Porcelains are highly fired ceramic bodies that vitrify in the firing resulting in non-porous vessels with a glass-like surface finish without the need for additional glazing. The light-coloured, glossy surface of hard-paste Chinese porcelain is particularly suited to enamel painted decoration and underglaze decoration, both perfected in China during the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 16 44). Savage and Newman set out the qualitative criteria for both the Chinese and European

resulted for example in the development of tin-glazed earthenware, (or faience depending on the country of manufacture), salt glazed earthenware and stone wares and lead glazed earthenware.[8] It was also the motivating factor for the development of a bone-china body for quality tableware, which made the Staffordshire Potteries a world centre for ceramic manufacture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[9]

Technical developments and a new ordering of design and manufacture underpinned the growing sophistication pertaining to both the design and production of European ceramics from the mid-eighteenth century onwards when they began to be produced on a large scale. The factory system of production enabled good quality affordable wares to be produced for a much wider market and that was taken to new dimensions when manufacturing was centralised and industrialised in North Staffordshire in the nineteenth century. There are other complex variables which support that analysis outside of the

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tests for 'true' porcelain. A key feature for both versions was an ultra-thin ceramic body which, produces a ringing tone when struck (Chinese) and is translucent when held up to the light (European). George Savage and Harold Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Ceramics*, 2nd edition (revised), Thames & Hudson, 1985, p.227

[8] Fine stoneware was produced in Germany from the 16th century. Although stoneware is highly fired like porcelain and is vitreous it is not true porcelain because it is rarely translucent. Stoneware vessels and tableware were made in Staffordshire in the 18th century with salt glazed and lead glazed finishes. Thomas Whieldon, Josiah Wedgwood's former partner, made thrown and turned stoneware vessels that were prized for their precise shapes and finely glazed finish. Stoneware vessels with light bodies and white or light coloured glazes were the mainstays of quality tableware production in his and other North Staffordshire potteries during the first half of the 18th century. Josiah Wedgwood continued to experiment with different stoneware bodies out of which came the self-coloured Jasper body and Black and Bronze Basaltes which were used for his neo-classical architectural and ornamental lines. A useful summary of these mid-18th century developments is found in Adrian Forty, op.cit. Ch1 'Images of Progress', pp. 11 –28.

[9] The invention of bone-china is ascribed to Josiah Spode II c 1794. The Staffordshire firms, Spode and Minton began to specialise in bone-china for tableware and ornaments. Although earthenware tableware remained the biggest single category by the end of the nineteenth century other Staffordshire firms associated with quality products including Wedgwood, Doulton and Minton expanded production of tableware into fine bone-china. Bone-china also became the mainstay for ornamental pieces or 'fancies' and it has been made on a large commercial scale in Staffordshire Potteries since then. See Savage and Newman, *Illustrated Dictionary*, op cit. p., p.51.

scope of this thesis. These include the changes in eating habits, cuisine and etiquette and the uptake of tea, coffee and chocolate drinking that called for glazed or non-porous ceramic vessels and social transformations throughout Europe and later its colonies, from the 16th century, which saw the gradual emergence of large bourgeois classes that became the principal market for high quality factory-made domestic ceramics. Those combined cultural and social changes were clearly the driving force behind the search for fine but affordable non-porous ceramic bodies and improved glazes that culminated in the early nineteenth century in the invention of bone-china.[10] By the eighteenth century, potters throughout Europe had synthesised aspects of Chinese and oriental porcelain design and decoration into their own productions and by then other strands of influence were drawn upon including contemporary and classical artistic traditions.[11]

Josiah Wedgwood and the early industrialisation of ceramics manufacture

It is well documented that Josiah Wedgwood's critical awareness of his industry and its markets extended beyond Britain to the Continent of Europe and the European colonies. His ambitious entrepreneurialism combined with the rational and scientific outlook fostered by Enlightenment thinking provided a new model for large-scale pottery making which was not superseded until the twentieth century.[12] John Heskett argued that that the systematisation of

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[10] The most widespread change came from empirical experiments with white or lighter glazes on earthenware or stoneware bodies. The most famous example of a non-porcelain derivative was Wedgwood's lead glazed cream-coloured earthenware or 'Queensware' that itself spawned many imitations throughout Europe.

[11] In the second half of the eighteenth century when the Wedgwood firm was established the range of stylistic influences for ceramic decoration and modelling included late versions of Baroque, Rococo, Chinoiserie (a variation of Rococo based upon European interpretations of oriental forms and motifs,) and Neo-classicism. See Robin Reilly and George Savage, *The Dictionary of Wedgwood,* Antique & Collectors' Club, Woodbridge, 1980.

[12] Josiah Wedgwood was a founder member of the Birmingham Lunar Society, whose fellow members included scientists, artists and manufacturers and a Fellow of the Royal Society. These institutions were the manifestations of the cultural and philosophical movement called the Enlightenment, which, from the seventeenth century in Britain, advanced the causes of

production along factory lines as established by Wedgwood and his contemporary, Matthew Boulton placed greater emphasis on design as a separate process to manufacturer.[13] Heskett and Forty acknowledged the importance of Wedgwood's neo-classical ornamental wares in establishing his reputation for fine and innovative ceramic lines. However, both recognised the greater significance of Queensware, the light-coloured, lead-glazed earthenware body, developed and perfected by Wedgwood, in bringing about a more fundamental change to the manufacture of ceramics.[14] Forty's persuasive analysis shows that this drive to improve quality through standardisation of form and decoration called for specialised designers who had technical understanding and a sophisticated awareness of the market's requirement for novel ideas and contemporary styles.[15]

Wedgwood and neo-classical styles

The main stylistic reference that Josiah Wedgwood incorporated in both his 'useful' and 'ornamental' wares was to the ancient traditions of classical Greek

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science and reason over superstition and irrational belief. See Peter Brooker, *A Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory,* Arnold, 1999, p. 73.
Wedgwood embodied the Enlightenment ideal especially through his belief that the arts could and should be harnessed in a rational way to the sciences and through his specifically empirical approach to the scientific aspects of manufacture.

[13] Heskett argued that the reconciling of utilitarian and aesthetic factors in Wedgwood's commercial approach to ceramic manufacture meant that design was conceived as a separate and applied aspect of production. John Heskett, *Industrial Design,* 1980, pp. 13 –18

[14] Wedgwood's Queensware, cream or ivory coloured earthenware with a soft translucent lead glaze was perfected by Wedgwood c. 1763. It became known as Queensware after Queen Charlotte purchased several sets and granted Wedgwood the right to that title. In addition to its fine aesthetic qualities the lead-based glaze used on Queensware had the practical advantage of not scratching silver cutlery. The success of Queensware and its imitations largely destroyed the market for tin-glazed wares that had been made in Staffordshire and other British and Continental centres since the 17th century. Reilly and Savage, op cit. *The Dictionary of Wedgwood.*

[15] Forty explains that process in Chapter 2, 'The First Industrial Designers', Op. cit. Forty, *Objects of Desire,* pp. 29 – 41

and Etruscan pottery.[16] Greek and Roman archetypes were both the inspiration for his modern and innovative designs and the benchmarks against which they were evaluated.[17] That is confirmed by this often-quoted explanation written by him in 1789: 'I have attempted to preserve the style and spirit or if you please the elegant simplicity of antique forms and so doing to introduce all the variety I was able and this Sir William Hamilton assures me I may venture to do and that is the true way of copying the antique'.[18] The associations with the 'antique' were reinforced by naming the new works in (Burslem) Stoke-on-Trent, 'Etruria' and by much publicised projects such as the replication of the Portland vase (an example of Greco-Roman cameo glass cutting) utilising his innovative Jasper body.[19] Through such strategies Wedgwood succeeded in creating an aura of tradition around both his business and its products.

It is clear, both from his writing and from the high artistic standards of the work produced by artists of the status of John Flaxman and George Stubbs, that Wedgwood's immersion in the antique was not simply and pragmatically commercial. Indeed, Wedgwood's deference to the ideas on the correct use of classical prototypes of his mentor Sir William Hamilton suggests that he was

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[16] One of the sources of antique examples subscribed to by Wedgwood and his fellow manufacturer Matthew Boulton was folios of engravings by Sir William Hamilton, *Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities,* published in Naples between 1766 – 1776. See Viccy Coltman, 'Sir William Hamilton's Vase Publications (1766 –1776): A case study in the Reproduction and Dissemination of Antiquity', *Journal Of Design History,* Vol 14, Number 1 2001, pp 1 – 16.

[17] Wedgwood's uptake of neo-classical styles was largely down to the influence of his business partner, Thomas Bentley who was aware of the fashionable interest in the antique stemming from the archaeological finds at Herculaneum (1738) and Pompeii (1748). The firm made neo-classical ornaments for the architect Robert Adam, (1728 - 1792), who was credited with originating a new style for architecture, interiors, furniture and domestic items, based on careful study of Roman originals.

[18] Correspondence between Josiah Wedgwood I and Erasmus Darwin (1789) cited in Pamela Wood, *Mr Wedgwood,* (exhibition catalogue), Nottingham Castle Musem (June 14 – Sept 7, 1975), p 72.

[19] The Portland Vase, so named after its 18th century owner, the Duke of Portland, was a prized example of Roman glass making and cameo cutting. Josiah Wedgwood was allowed to borrow it in order to make a copy in ceramics. The first Jasper copy was finished in 1789 and subsequently about 40 copies were made and sold by subscription. Reilly and Savage, op cit. *The Dictionary of Wedgwood.*

deployed in a quest for a modern and authentic form of classicism.[20] Turning in the wholesale way that he did to neo-classicism signalled an embrace of the innovative and the modern. But it was a serious and scholastic modernity not a trivial modernity as epitomised in the courtly French rococo style of the mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore it was a pan-European style in terms of its origins and an international style in terms of its eighteenth century adherents.[21] At the heart of eighteenth century neo-classicism was a duality of innovation and tradition that both acknowledged the civilised heritage of the classical world and also proclaimed a modernising ethos at one and the same time.

The reverence attached to period Wedgwood (i.e. late eighteenth century examples) by the second half of the nineteenth century indicates that Wedgwood wares had achieved the same cultural and historical status in the decorative arts as earlier European porcelain factories, such as Vincennes-Sèvres (France) and Meissen (Germany); a history in which British manufacturers had hitherto played only a minor role.[22] Thus since the second half of the nineteenth century, 'Old Wedgwood' wares have occupied a unique position in ceramic history in being celebrated for their period authenticity and for their historical significance in terms of marking the origins of the modern ceramics industry.[23] The growing consciousness of its past shaped the firm's

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[20] A quest that echoed Robert Adam's aims '...to infuse the beautiful spirit of antiquity with novelty and variety' as claimed in the introduction to Robert & James Adam's *Works in Architecture,* (1773)

[21] The Neoclassical style of architecture (and interior designs) was taken up in Germany, France and America (as well as England, Ireland and Scotland) in the second half of the eighteenth century.

[22] See Bruce Tattershall, 'Felix Joseph and his Collection', in *Mr Wedgwood*, op.cit. pp 90 – 91 for a brief discussion of the onset of Wedgwood collecting in the 19th century. Tattershall explains that the collecting boom (which involved prominent people such as Gladstone and Arthur Sanderson) was spawned by the publications of important Wedgwood biographies including one by E. Meteyard (1865), who at the time was curator of the Wedgwood Museum. Bruce Tattershall, as then curator of the Wedgwood Museum, was following on in the scholarly tradition which it continues to foster.

[23] Savage and Newman define 'Old Wedgwood' as objects made by the firm during the first Josiah Wedgwood's lifetime, (i.e up until 1795). Op.cit. *Illustrated Dictionary,* p. 206.

outlook and ethos and was surely the principal idea behind its slogan of the inter-war period: 'Wedgwood – A Living Tradition'.

The duality of tradition and innovation

That sense of a 'living tradition' had a profound effect on the history of the firm, which remained a family concern from its foundation in 1759 by the first Josiah Wedgwood (1730 - 1790) until the 1960s.[24] Family members consistently held key posts in the firm and from the time of the first Josiah, made major contributions to its historiography and helped to foster a corporate identity based upon the neo-classical tradition. Wedgwood's original eighteenth century inventions, for example, neo-classical Jasperware has been in continuous production throughout the firm's history, especially for special and commemorative pieces. Such lines have given Wedgwood a distinctive identity that continues to connect its current production with its acclaimed past. That strong 'brand heritage' has been an important marketing tool for the firm's products, especially in developing and maintaining its presence in international markets.

One important legacy of the ceramic tradition 'invented' by Josiah Wedgwood has been the employment of artists, architects, sculptors and designers to create special pieces or ranges for the firm. When, in the 1930s the Wedgwood firm advertised new ranges designed by the architect Keith Murray they used the 'Wedgwood, A Living Tradition' slogan to imply a continuum between the golden era of eighteenth century neo-classicism and its twentieth century architect designed ceramics. Neo-classicism as a style signified the highly sophisticated synthesis of classical knowledge and originality in design. In terms of pottery manufacture, neo-classical design demanded accurate standards of draftsmanship that aligned it to architectural design. Thus the inference of a 'living tradition' in that context was a seamless and progressive shift from one

[24] Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd became a public limited company in 1967.

form of original and rational design (i.e. eighteenth century neo-classicism) to another (i.e. twentieth century Modernism).

However any discussion about Wedgwood and tradition is complex and multi-facetted because both tradition and innovation, at various times throughout its history, were deliberately cultivated by the firm as a marketing tool. The myth of a seamless tradition was undermined in a major study of Wedgwood ware from the nineteenth and early twentieth century by decorative arts specialist, Maureen Batkin. That study reveals a more diverse set of practices and design enterprises that for a large part of the firm's history eschewed Wedgwood's eighteenth century neo-classical 'traditions'.[25] It is therefore ironic that the Wedgwood firm, for the greatest part of its history, has been famous for its traditions of quality and style associated with the glories of its eighteenth century neo-classical origins.

Wedgwood designs in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Batkin's detailed study of Wedgwood clearly illustrates that its output in the nineteenth century was surprisingly diverse, especially with regard to its ornamental lines.[26] There were two particular strands of development dating from nineteenth century design discourses, which shaped both the outlook and the design output of the firm into the early twentieth century up to the time that Murray worked for the firm. The first was an interest in artistic wares and the second was an engagement with the ideas and methods of the Arts & Crafts Movement.

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[25] Maureen Batkin, *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846 – 1959: A New appraisal,* Dennis, London, 1981. Batkin's study is an admirable catalogue of styles and techniques and of monographs on Wedgwood artists and designers during this lesser known period of the firm's history.

[26] 'Ornamental wares' denotes interior accessories such as vases and decorative bowls, that is not table ware. Sometimes the term 'useful and ornamental ware' is used to denote a broader range of domestic accessories that are intended to be primarily decorative but may also have a function, for example candlesticks, tobacco jars and trinket boxes.

The innovation in commercial pottery manufacture in the second half of the nineteenth century was in artistic wares, or more specifically Art Pottery.[27] The emphasis placed upon 'Art for Art's Sake' in second half of the nineteenth century gave a new role and status to British factory-made ceramic ornaments.[28] That distinction was not lost on manufacturers, especially Minton and Doulton who established separate Art Pottery studios and Wedgwood who sought out and commissioned artists and designers of national repute.[29] Despite not having a separate Art Pottery studio, Wedgwood re-established its reputation for ceramic artistry by employing leading artists and designers including Emile Lessore and Thomas Allen, (who became Wedgwood's Art Director). The connection with Lessore and other artists and designers involved on a freelance basis, most notably Walter Crane, Christopher Dresser and William De Morgan

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[27] Batkin's study explains the expansion of ornamental production at Wedgwood in the early Victorian era that disposed it towards specialised Art Pottery production in the second half of the 19th century. To an extent, it developed out of Wedgwood's 18th century tradition of modelling in stoneware bodies. For example fine ornamental ware and figurines were made in an ever-growing range of compositions that included original bodies such as Basaltes and Jasper and the new biscuit porcelain body, Parian. In the mid-nineteenth century, it introduced new ornamental ranges in keeping with the historicist and eclectic tastes of the High Victorian era. One such example was Majolica wares that began to be produced as a distinct line in the 1860s. These were decorated with multi-coloured lustre glazes inspired by Italian Renaissance faience. Batkin, op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics*, pp 17 – 49

[28] The status of Art Pottery should be understood in the broader context of the Aesthetic Movement affecting art, architecture (especially domestic) and design. 'Aesthetes' reviled the perceived philistinism that was permeating culture and society as a result of industrialisation and Utilitarian outlooks. They aimed for a higher existence in which creative expression was valued over materialism. Proponents of 'Art for Art's Sake' were not antithetic towards factory-made goods but sought more artistically-conceived items for the home, hence the tendency of some firms associated with the decorative arts to set up studios staffed by designer-decorators. See Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau,* Findale Editions, 1980. For an overview of the Aesthetic influence on British architecture and design, especially the late 19th century style associated with the domestic architecture of Nornam Shaw, see Mark Girouard, *Sweetness & Light: the Queen Anne Movement, 1860 – 1900,* Clarendeon Press (oxford), 1977.

[29] Both Minton and Doulton established Art Pottery studios in London c.1870 in order to make a different and more artistic class of wares than at their main factories. The Minton Art Pottery studio was located in South Kensington although the Minton factory was in Stoke-on-Trent. The Doulton Art Pottery studio was founded at the firm's Lambeth factory. Wedgwood did not establish a separate art pottery, although it made a similar distinction between art pottery (or in its case artist designed pottery) and mainstream commercial production. Many of the artists and designers associated with art pottery at Wedgwood were freelance and produced their creative ideas away from the works. Decorating and designing of artistic wares was undertaken at Etruria in the handpainting studio and the Fine Art studio.

ensured that Wedgwood was duly recognised for its commitment to Art Pottery. The employment of artists and designers of distinction was in keeping with the first Josiah's commitment to design however, because it emphasised original artistry, the nineteenth century Art Pottery movement produced works that were different to the mainstay of Wedgwood's eighteenth century ornamental designs.[30] Wedgwood's studio aesthetic gave the artist-designer a more creative role and a special status. To underline that status, the artists' name, monogram or facsimile signature was painted or backstamped on individual art wares, a practice that continued when Murray worked for the firm.[31]

At a commercial level the influence of Art Pottery was extended to tiles and (bone) 'china fancies' (inexpensive ornamental lines).[32] The breadth of stylistic influences included Japanese, Renaissance, Persian and novelty themes, designed to complement the eclectic mix of Eastern exoticism and historicist styling of the nineteenth century interior.[33] The tradition of studio-originated decorated ware persisted into the twentieth century at Wedgwood as evidenced by the exotic *Fairyland Lustre* and *Dragon* ranges designed by staff designer,

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[30] That difference lay in their status as autonomous art objects (akin to sculpture or paintings), unlike their eighteenth century counterparts, for example neo-classical designs in Jasper, Basaltes and Queensware bodies, were conceived as accessories and architectural fitments to be integrated into Adam-style (neo-classical) interior schemes.

[31] Individual artists' names were rarely painted on the wares on 18th century Wedgwood items. A rare exception was work by the neo-classicist John Flaxman

[32] According to Batkin, Wedgwood began production of bone-china tableware at the beginning of the 19th century, although production ceased after 1815. It was re-introduced in 1878, especially for 'fancy' ware and later for fine tableware. By the middle of the 20th century production of bone-china tableware began to eclipse that of earthenware at Wedgwood. See M. Batkin, op. cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics*,. p. 90. Savage and Newman indicate that the firm's first venture into bone-china was between 1812 – 29, see Savage and Newman, *Illustrated Dictionary*, op cit. p.313.

[33] Following Doulton's successes with artistic tiles, Wedgwood also expanded production into decorated floor and wall tiles in 1875. Wedgwood artist Thomas Allen made designs for tiles in keeping with the artistic themes of the Art Pottery studio. The Arts & Craft designer, William De Morgan made some deigns for tiles with a lustre finish. See M. Batkin, Ch VII, 'Tiles', in op cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp. 108 – 118.

Daisy Makeig-Jones and decorated by hand.[34] These expensive highly decorated lines were one of the first casualties of Wedgwood's rationalisation programme of the early 1930s (as was Makeig –Jones herself).[35] In that respect, they ended a tradition lasting over sixty years of ornate handpainted wares that owed little to Wedgwood's eighteenth century neo-classical legacy.

In the early years of the twentieth century the hand painted tradition took another direction with the employment of 'outside' designer-decorators, Alfred and Louise Powell whose educational and philosophical background was shaped by the ideas of the Arts and Crafts Movement.[36] The Powells designed and hand decorated items for Wedgwood in their own London studio and showroom.[37] Their simple, hand-painted designs for tableware and home accessories (including vases, candlesticks, chargers etc) offered a more wholesome alternative to ornate factory-made china and Art Pottery. This particular episode in the firm's history indicates a genuinely innovative attitude to both design and production that, on the surface at least, seemed implacably opposed to the eighteenth century factory aesthetic.

The success of that enterprise can be assessed in terms of disseminating artistic, hand decorated goods to a wider clientele. In this respect, they were in keeping with the ethos of the Arts & Crafts Movement but in other ways they were not.

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[34] Daisy Makeig-Jones introduced various lustre patterns, including Dragon designs from 1914. The popular Fairyland Lustres were introduced in 1915. These ornate wares sold well throughout the 1920s but production was ceased in 1931. See Batkin op.cit *Wedgwood Ceramics* p 121.

[35] See Cheryl Buckley's brief account of Makeig-Jones 22 year career at Wedgwood, which finished acrimoniously in 1931: *Potters & Paintresses: Women Designers in the Pottery Industry 1870 – 1955,* Women's Press , 1990, pp. 81 -84.

[36] The partnership between the Powell's and Wedgwood started in 1903, when Alfred Powell first submitted designs to the firm. In 1906 he married the artist, Ada Louise Lessore and the collaborative design venture of the Powells began. Their work for Wedgwood continued on a regular basis until the Second World War. See Batkin, Ch IX, 'Alfred and Louise Powell, op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp. 138 – 155.

[37] Ibid, p.p 140 -1, Although Alfred Powell designed some new forms, the making of the pots was undertaken at the Etruria works and sent on to London for hand decorating in the Powell's workshop.

For example, many of the designs were subsequently simplified for series production in the hand-painting workshops at Wedgwood's Etruria works.[38] Yet although the studio-designed Powell ranges conformed to Arts & Crafts aesthetic conventions, their series production in the factory hardly accorded with handicraft principles that were central to its ethos. There was also a separation between design process (in the Powell's studio) and the execution of the patterns by freehand paintresses in the workshops. Although a certain degree of artistry was necessary for freehand painting, the girls were not generally required to design or were they allowed any freedom to improvise.[39] Indeed, although manufacturing at the Wedgwood factory included processes, especially painting that relied on handicraft skills, the organisation of production in the factory and painting shop setting replicated the strict divisions of labour established and refined by the first Josiah Wedgwood in the eighteenth century.[40]

Art Direction at Wedgwood in the early twentieth century

The key to understanding how those various strands previously outlined (including the Art Pottery Movement and the Craft Revival) became synthesised into Wedgwood's spectrum of production in the early twentieth

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[38] In response to the commercial success of the Powells' designs, Wedgwood expanded its hand-painting department at the Etruria works. Freehand decorators trained by the Powell's executed their designs under the Powell's supervision. Batkin, Ch IX, 'Alfred and Louise Powell, op.cit. pp. 138 – 155

[39] Whilst very few women were allowed to advance beyond painting designers' motifs and patterns for production purposes, there were notable exceptions at Wedgwood especially Daisy Makeig-Jones (staff designer 1914 - 1931), Millicent Taplin, (staff designer 1928 - 1962) and Star Wedgwood (design- active late 1920s - 1937) The most noted was the promotion of Millicent Taplin from paintress to staff designer in 1928. Taplin was trained by Alfred Powell and was highly influenced by Louise Powell's style of working. She also undertook part-time study in art and design at the Stoke School of Art. See Cheryl Buckley, op.cit *Potters & Paintresses*, pp. 100 – 106.

[40] The first Josiah recorded in a letter to his partner Bentley, his irritation at the tendency of some painters to modify or personalise their decoration at their whim. He sought to control all aspects of production so that the end product would be uniform in appearance and of a standardised quality. Cited in Forty, Op cit. p 33

century is a consideration of how the firm's design strategy was managed in practice. In that respect, the firm's Art Director, John Goodwin, played a central role and provided a continuum in the transition from its Arts & Crafts orientation to its 'design for industry' ethos of the 1920s and '30s.[41] Under Goodwin's direction, the Art Pottery tradition was strengthened and commercialised and by the time of the First World War he had built up a large porcelain studio to handle intricate enamelling and gilding for ornamental bone-china wares. In that specialist environment designers such as Daisy Makeig-Jones originated new and successful ornate lines such as Powder Blue and Fairyland Lustre that brought commercial success to the firm in the early 1920s.

Parallel to that and also under his direction was the experiment with handcrafted wares under the artistic leadership of Alfred and Louise Powell. The chief area of overlap between Powell's handicraft designs and more commercially-directed production was in hand painted earthenware. In 1926, Goodwin established its Craft Studio staffed by a small team of specially selected female decorator/designers led by Millicent Taplin.[42] The lines produced in the Craft Studio in the late 1920s such as vases, breakfast sets and tea-sets were in keeping with the growing trend in middle-class tastes and purses for bright and attractive 'everyday' items and smaller sets of tableware.[43]

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[41] Goodwin joined the firm in 1892 and was made Art Director in 1904 a position he held until he retired in 1934.

[42] The increased size of the painting studios increased the scope for women to train as artist–designers in the early twentieth century, not least because of the opportunities that this afforded to women in terms of taking up some form of tertiary art and/or design education. Batkin's account states that two of the girls employed to assist Millicent Taplin in the studio were trained at the Burslem School of Art and were recommended by Gordon Forsyth who was Superintendent of the Stoke-on-Trent art schools. See Batkin, Ch. X 'Millicent Taplin and Handcraft Painting', in op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp.156 – 164.
Both Millicent Taplin and Star Wedgwood received part of their training in the art of pottery painting from the Powells. Taplin acknowledged that Louise Powell was her professional role model through whose influence she made the unusual transition from factory painter to staff designer. See Cheryl Buckley, Ch 3, 'Alternative Roles For Women: the hand painting revival and art pottery' in Buckley op.cit. *Potters & Paintresses,* pp. 70 – 95.

[43] Prices for hand-painted wares were kept relatively low for much of the inter-war period because of the low costs and ready availability of female labour during times of economic setbacks and trade recessions.

The less formal decorative homewares designed and hand painted by Taplin and Star Wedgwood were characterised by a cosy but contemporary domesticity. In that respect they were the antithesis of the large, traditional bone-china table services and richly ornamented china fancies that had been the mainstays of Wedgwood's commercial production from the 1880s, yet, surprisingly both types of production co-existed at the firm under Goodwin's Art Direction.[44]

With regard to tableware Goodwin was involved from the beginning of his Art Directorship with programmes of rationalisation particularly through simplifying shapes and reducing the number of patterns. His promotion had come at a time when the firm was commercially oriented to building up new markets in Europe and America with product lines that were designed specifically, sometimes exclusively for those markets.[45] What came out of that new focus impacted on design and production at the firm in at least two major ways. The most significant factor was a more strategic awareness of developing Wedgwood as a distinctive brand (and a brand which in today's advertising parlance had 'heritage value'). Contingent to that was the recognition that for overseas markets, especially America and France, Wedgwood's reputation was associated with its eighteenth century neo-classical tableware rather than the artistry and eclecticism of its nineteenth century art pottery.[46]

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[44] The re-introduction of bone-china production in the era of High Victorian taste saw the uptake of complex shapes and richly ornamented naturalistic patterns and some based on 18th century Chinoiserie styles for porcelain. In that respect they were distinctly outside of the Wedgwood 'tradition'. Batkin, op.cit. Ch VI, 'Victorian Tablewares', *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp. 88 – 107.

[45] The setting up of a North American branch of the firm in 1906 focussed attention on the requirements of that developing market. The North American Branch was run by Kennard Wedgwood who recognised the need for the firm to develop relationships with its overseas customers and to provide feedback to the management with regards to tastes and trends in those markets. During this same period, the firm made important alliances with major French retailers, especially Georges Rouard, through its Paris showroom, opened in 1901. Batkin, op.cit. Ch VIII, 'John Goodwin and his Influence', *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp. 118 – 137.

[46] Kennard Wedgwood's recognition that the American market was especially inclined towards designs based on Wedgwood's eighteenth century styles, may well have been influenced by the Neo-classical Revival in the USA between approximately, 1890 and 1910.

Goodwin's response was to focus on the neglected area of tableware design, and sought to revive some of the characteristics associated with 'Old Wedgwood' albeit along pragmatic commercial lines. He designed new tableware ranges based on eighteenth century forms for the French and American markets. These such as 'Edme' (a neo-classical-inspired design that is still in production today), were made using Wedgwood's original cream-coloured earthenware body rather than bone-china.[47] He was also able to draw on the firm's eighteenth century shape and pattern books and in the early twentieth century some of the original Queensware shapes were reintroduced. Such evidence and the fact that he worked with the Powells to reinstate the hand painting of original neo-classical border patterns on revived eighteenth century shapes indicates that Godwin was inspired to seek a more authentic reproduction of past styles.[48]

It was possibly Goodwin's involvement with authentic neo-classical design during the first decade of the twentieth century that led to Wedgwood's engagement with the principles of Modernist design in the1930s. It evidently informed his perception of how some of the essential characteristics associated with neo-classical design might be adapted for simpler and less expensive earthenware table services. For example, in the 1920s he designed and introduced a range of plain, self-coloured earthenware tableware for less affluent customers in the home market.[49] Self-coloured earthenware (most notably yellow-bodied cane wares) had been made by Wedgwood since the eighteenth century. Although Goodwin's new version in Cane, Lavender (a grey-blue) and Wintergreen (a subtle green), was inspired by the simple elegance of eighteenth century Queensware, it was altogether more utilitarian in

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[47] The Edme service was designed in 1908 and produced for Pannier Frères, Paris. That continued in production throughout the twentieth century alongside another Godwin-designed cream-coloured earthenware service; 'Patrician', also inspired by eighteenth century shapes and ornament. 'Patrician' was designed for the American market.

[48] Batkin Op.cit. Ch VIII, 'John Goodwin and his Influence', pp118 – 137

[49] Ibid

character as evident in the photograph taken from Herbert Read's book, *Art and Industry,* (see Fig. 3:1).

Modern Wedgwood pottery. The "Queensware" cup-and-saucer and sugar-basin, as well as the tea-pot in black "basalt" ware, are functional designs evolved in the latter part of the eighteenth century, which have persisted primarily because of their efficiency. But all the forms approximate to simple basic types, and their beauty is due to their precision and simplicity, and their geometric harmony. Photo: Messrs Wedgwood and Co.

Fig. 3:1

Part of a Queensware table service designed by John Goodwin c.1920

Its utilitarian simplicity was turned to Wedgwood's advantage when the British design reform movement began to exert some influence on the tastes of customers and buyers in the 1920s and '30s. The undecorated self-coloured earthenware tableware was sold at the design-conscious London store, Heal and Son Ltd. where it became a stock item.[50] The modernity of Goodwin's design

[50] Heals were clearly so taken with it that they reserved one version which was known as 'Honey Buff'. A 'reserved' line in that sense is a stock design that is made exclusively for a

was confirmed by its inclusion in *Art and Industry* to exemplify industrial ceramic art. This illustrates Wedgwood's growing stature within the design reform movement in Britain, an involvement that would develop on several fronts in the 1930s (as discussed in Part Two of this chapter).

Goodwin's skills in updating eighteenth century versions of the classical in accord with contemporary tastes had long-lasting consequences for Wedgwood's tableware shapes in the early twentieth century. It is important to emphasis that it was only one of several strategies he pursued and therefore it did not by itself effect a radical transformation to simple everyday wares. It is fair to say that by the end of Goodwin's career in 1934, that agenda was central to Wedgwood's design policy but until the 1930s it was only one of several directional strands (albeit a major one). The other major strand arising from his collaborations with the Powells resulted in Arts & Crafts inspired designs and design practices being integrated into its mainstream production. A particularly good example from the early 1930s is the Veronese range designed initially by the Powells and successfully adapted for large-scale production by Godwin as a 'modern' Wedgwood line.[51] It is revealing because it demonstrates a broadly held belief especially amongst design reformers and design educators at the time that Arts & Crafts approaches to design could creatively underpin Modern industrial design.[52] Indeed its commercial success may have prepared the ground for the more austerely Modernist designs of Keith Murray.

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retailer. Heal's Honeybuff was a modern version of Wedgwood's 18th century cane-coloured wares.

[51] Veronese wares were initially the creation of Alfred and Louise Powell however the designs were simplified for series production at the factory, rather than at the Powell's studio. See Batkin, Ch. XI 'Veronese Wares', in op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp. 164 - 165

[52] Gordon Forsyth, (1879 - 1952) who was Superintendent of the Stoke-on-Trent Art Schools, was an influential figure in the design reform movement relating to ceramic design and manufacture. He played a major part in bringing about changes to the role of artists and decorators in the pottery industry especially through his role as educator. Although he had progressive ideas concerning designing for industry he held fast to certain Arts & Crafts principles especially concerning the artist-craftsperson. Through his influence as an educator and an industry adviser he encouraged women to train as hand paintresses and secured work for them at sympathetic local firms. Some of those women made the transition from decorator to pattern designer, thus reinstating the role of designer-maker in the modern industrial setting.

Veronese wares were marketed from about 1932 as a co-ordinated range of home accessories comprising bowls, jugs, vases, ash trays and lampshades. According to Wedgwood's promotional literature, Veronese had a contemporary appeal attributed to '... simplicity of form and decoration modernist in the best sense...'an appraisal which indicated a cautious response to Modernist design philosophy.[53] The range comprised of nine variations of patterns or motifs hand painted in platinum or bronze lustre on simple earthenware shapes. The shapes ranged from a traditional 'Liverpool' jug shape to modernistic designs for lamp bases created for the range by works manager, Norman Wilson and the sculptor-modeller, Eric Olsen.[54] The choice of seven subtly coloured glazes enabled customers to select items that co-ordinated with colour schemes in the home, in other words, they were domestic design accessories rather than *objéts d'art*.

Although the pieces were made and decorated mainly by hand methods, the simple designs could be produced in bulk at the factory and consequently prices were competitive in relation to more traditional decorated ornamental ceramics (especially porcelain or bone china 'fancies'). The shapes were mainly thrown and turned and the borders and patterns painted by hand in the firm's Craft Studio (hence there was no requirement to modernise production methods). Despite the handicraft methods used in their manufacture, the well-proportioned forms and excellent, blemishless finish achieved with the new subtly coloured Satin glazes proclaimed their factory rather than studio origins.[55]

See Batkin, Ch. X 'Millicent Taplin and Handcraft Painting', in op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp.156 – 164.

[53] Ibid. p.165 .

[54] Veronese wares were not sold under individual designer's names, although it was the design qualities that were emphasised in the firm's publicity literature.

[55] The Satin glazes were the first of a series of new matt glazes developed in the 1930s by Works Manager, Norman Wilson. For a concise overview of his achievements at the firm see Batkin, Ch XVI, 'Norman Wilson', in op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp.224 – 226

The popular success of the moderately priced Veronese wares indicates a new approach to design and marketing that recognised trends in domestic consumption, especially relating to interior design. Although that particular trend had been instigated under the Art Direction of John Goodwin, the Veronese range demonstrates the highly integrated approach to design and production that characterised Wedgwood in the 1930s. These constitute the 'watershed years' for the firm because of the tremendous upheavals caused not least by the Wall Street Crash of 1929 as the next part of the chapter will explain. It was during that difficult decade that Murray came to work for Wedgwood, firstly as a designer and later in the capacity of architect.

Part Two: Wedgwood in the Early 1930s – the 'Watershed' Years.

Rationalisation and modernisation

Murray's involvement with Wedgwood began in 1932 when he was employed as a freelance designer and paid on a retainer basis plus royalties. Such a commitment to a little known designer is remarkable given the financial and managerial crisis that the firm was experiencing through the decline of its American export market after 1929 which took the firm to the brink of bankruptcy in the early 1930s.[56] Analysis of trade figures represented in Graphs 6 & 7 revealed a spectacular drop in export sales of both earthenware and porcelain, especially after 1930, which reached its nadir in 1932.

As well as dealing with a global recession, the firm's stability was rocked in 1930 by the sudden death of its Chairman and Managing Director, Major Frank Wedgwood.[57] His death left the management of the firm in the hands of the sixth generation of the Wedgwood family. Ironically, 1930 was the bicentenary of its founder's birth, for which major celebrations had been planned, some with a view to stimulating sales. The hoped for revival in sales did not come about and Wedgwood's young directorial team had to rapidly devise a strategy to combat the deepening recession. Its new Managing Director, Josiah Wedgwood V, had joined Wedgwood in 1927 as Company Secretary and in 1928 became its Business Manager. Josiah V was supported by his cousins Clement 'Tom' Wedgwood, who became Plant Manager, Hensleigh Wedgwood who was

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[56] The principal export markets for its ceramic products were the USA, British Empire countries (including Australia, Canada, New Zealand), Europe and Argentina. The firm had overseas offices in those countries in the 1940s listed in its sales catalogues.

[57] Francis Wedgwood was a fifth generation Wedgwood who joined the firm in 1889. As Managing Director, he had steadily built up Wedgwood's trade and reputation from the decline caused by the Great War (1914 –1918). He formed an allegiance with the DIA in its early years whereas most other pottery manufacturers were hostile to the design reform ethos of simplicity and utility in the design of everyday things. In the late 1920s, he embarked on a modernisation programme at the Etruria Factory, introducing new gas fired and then electric fired tunnel kilns. At the time of his death, Wedgwood employed about 900 people, although that number was to fall as the recession took hold. (Batkin, op.cit p 15)

appointed Head of the New York Sales Office from 1931, John (later Sir John) Wedgwood, the firm's Sales Director and Cecily 'Star' Wedgwood, paintress and pattern designer.[58]

Josiah V embarked on a programme of rationalisation and modernisation in order to alleviate the recession. A two-pronged strategy was adopted, which involved changes to both its design policy and its production methods. The first stage of the rationalisation policy saw a reduction in the number of patterns for tableware and a severe restriction on the annual introduction of new lines and patterns. To cut costs in line with those changes the hand painting studios were contracted in size, production of the costly bone china was minimised and production of some of the more expensive ornamental lines (including the artistic lines designed by Makeig-Jones) was closed down.[59] Technical staff (especially Norman Wilson and Tom Wedgwood) played a part in re-organising production methods to cut costs and to enable bulk production of some earthenware lines, to the extent that the old Etruria works permitted changes.

The second part of that strategy was to focus on simple and less expensive table ware and domestic accessories that would appeal to an increasingly design-conscious middle class home market. In design terms that translated into more utilitarian lines (with limited or no applied decoration); a concentration on less expensive bodies (particularly earthenware rather than bone china) and the involvement of contemporary artists and designers with its Modern lines. Wedgwood's concentration on cheaper products was in line with a general deflationary trend affecting the British ceramics industry.[60] Analysis of export

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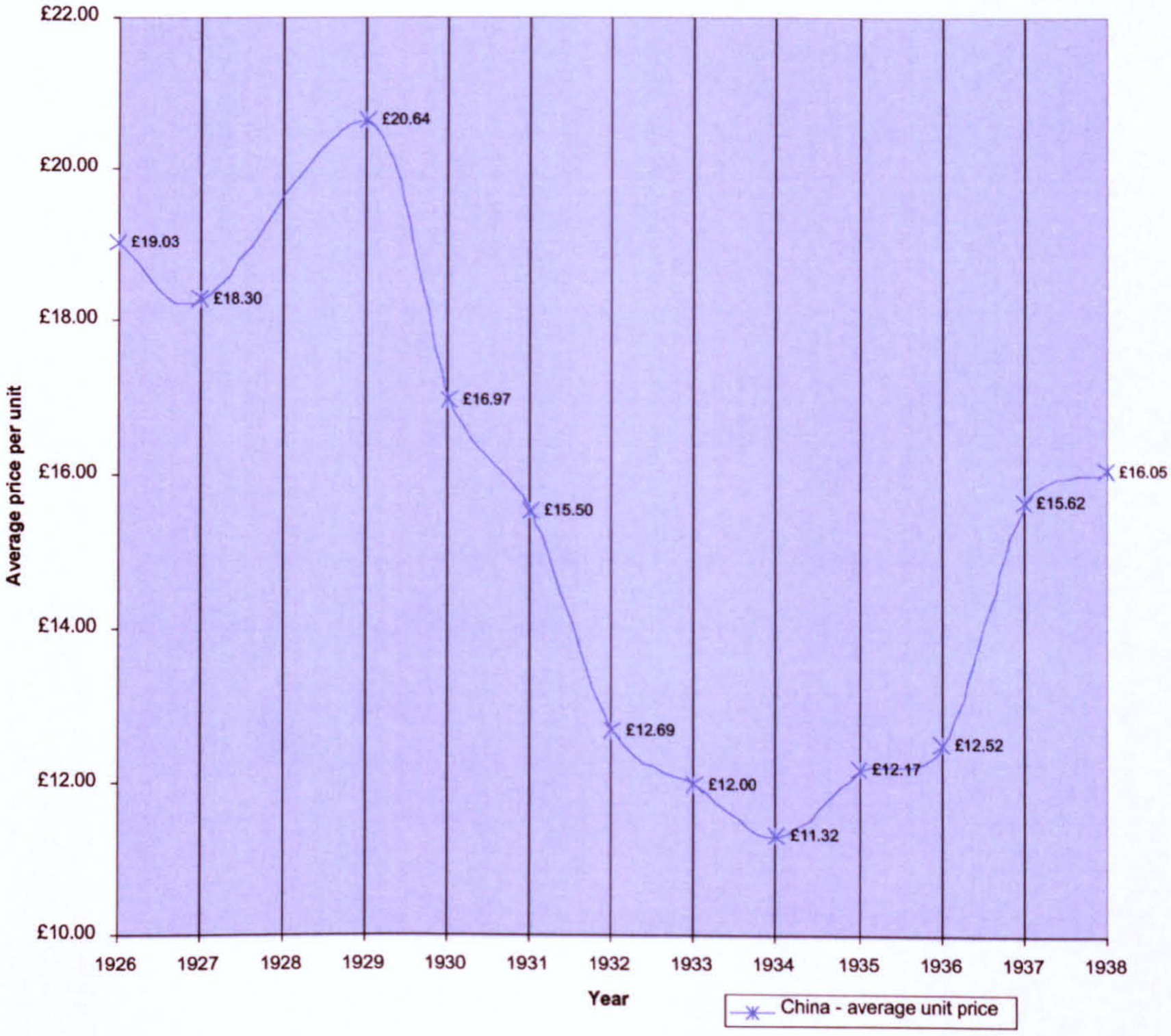
[58] It is notable that the four male cousins: Hensleigh, Josiah V, Tom and John Wedgwood all joined the firm between 1927 and 1931. It is likely that Francis Wedgwood and fellow family board members conceived the strategy of developing a young team of executives and managers several years before his untimely death in 1930.

[59] See W.B. Honey, Ch 4 'Modern Wedgwood Ware', in Honey, *Wedgwood Ware,* Faber & Faber, 1948. pp 22 – 25.

[60] The 1930s were a decade of deflationary price falls across virtually all sectors.

trade figures reveal a drop in the unit price of British porcelain and china goods from a high in 1929 of £20.64 per unit to low of £11.32 per unit in 1934 (see Graph 8).

Graph 8: British Yearly Exports of China, Pottery & Porcelain - average unit price (1926-1938)



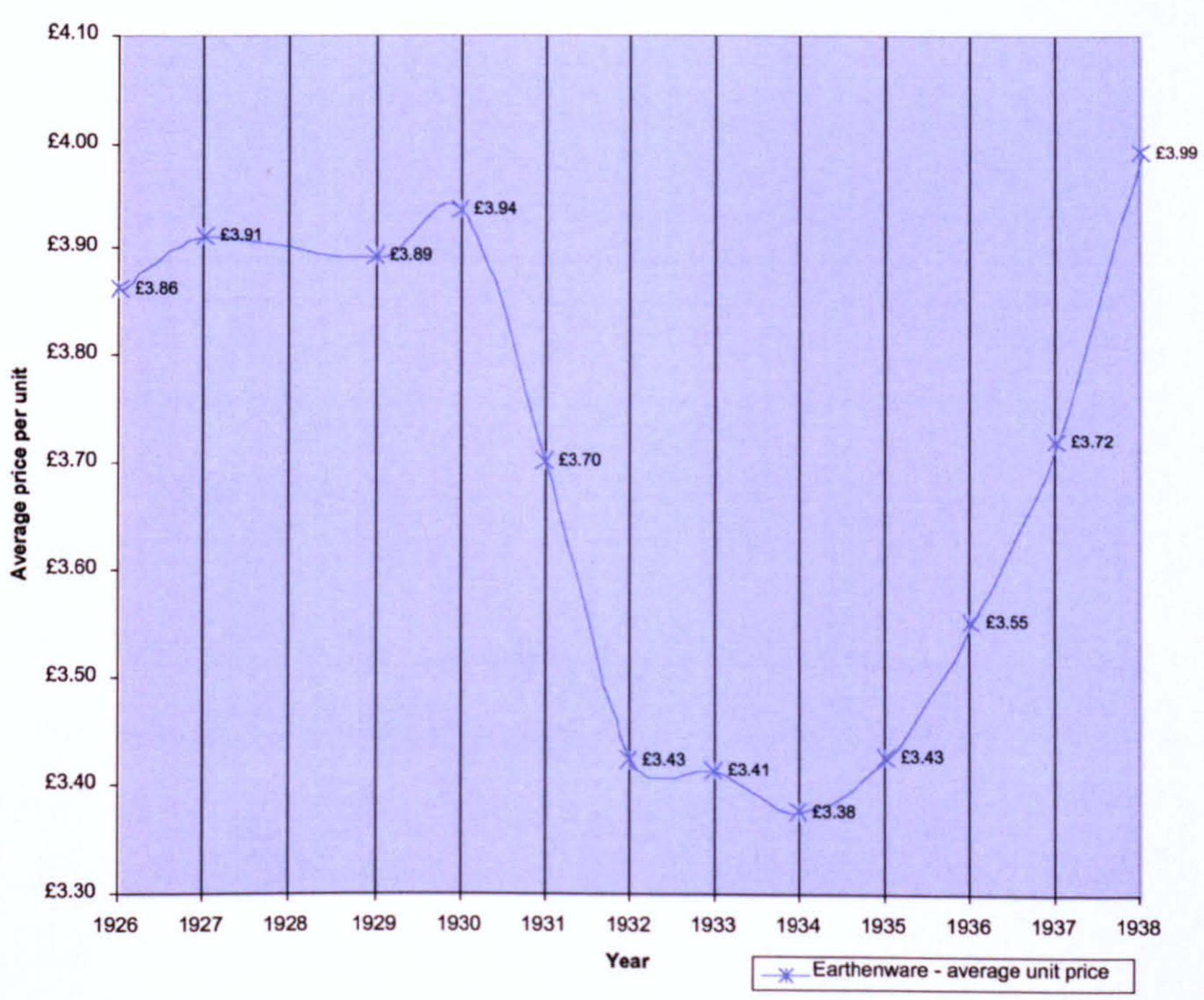
Graph 8

Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

Graph 9 shows an almost identical pattern with regards to the deflation in unit price of earthenware goods for export. A key difference is the great disparity in the unit price between earthenware goods and china and porcelain goods, which can be accounted for mainly in terms of the cheaper material and lower unit

production costs associated with large scale and even mass production of earthenware goods.[61]

Graph 9: British Yearly Exports of Earthenware - average unit price (1926-1938)



Graph 9

Source: tables of 'Imports and Exports of China, Earthenware, Glass and Glassware, (British Products)' published in *PGGTR,* between 1927 and 1939 (February editions).

The graphs indicate a year-on-year increase in unit value of china and porcelain goods and earthenware after 1934 concomitant with the economic recovery from the deep recession. An important economic factor to take into consideration was Britain's abandonment of the Gold Standard in 1931. The subsequent drop in value of sterling meant that British goods for export became more competitively priced and were able to stabilise to a greater extent than in

[61] The staple product of British bone china manufacture was the tea service or dinner service, which may account for the high unit price associated with that medium.

the 1920s.[62] The fact that the unit price for china and porcelain (which represented the expensive end of the domestic ceramic market) did not return to the pre-depression high even by the end of the 1930s supports a hypothesised shift towards making simpler and less costly versions of goods, which certainly reflected the trend undertaken by the Wedgwood firm.[63] As previously established, it had embarked on a programme of developing simpler and less expensive lines prior to the world recession through its involvement with the design reform movement and in particular with the DIA.

Design and Design Reform

The involvement of the firm in DIA activities and its engagement with debates about art and industry shows a degree of enlightenment that was missing in the general run of pottery manufacturers.[64] Through Frank Wedgwood and John Goodwin, the firm had evolved a policy of making some relatively low-cost lines that accorded with the DIA's call for simple well designed goods for everyday use. Goodwin's self-coloured utilitarian earthenware tableware accorded with the principles of design expounded by reform groups such as the

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[62] See John Ramsden (ed.), op.cit. *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth –Century British Politics*, p. 271

[63] Note that the drop in unit price of goods is more substantial for china, pottery and porcelain (the category for bone china ornaments and tableware and ornamental pottery) than it was for earthenware (mainly less expensive tableware and kitchenware).

[64] That began in 1916 after a contentious exhibition of British manufactured products organised by the DIA, which enraged pottery manufacturers. They objected to the selection of rather plain and utilitarian ceramic products on display which they did not consider to be representational of the industry or (and perhaps more importantly) did not show their most expensive and prestigious designs. The DIA, committed as they were to promoting good honest everyday design cared little for the self promoting instincts of the pottery owners and sought, through such public exhibitions of manufactured goods, to influence public taste and to educate the public and manufactures alike on the question of design. The alienation of such an important group of manufacturers accounted for the low esteem with which the DIA was long after held in the Stoke-on-Trent area. Frank Wedgwood intervened and in 1917 he invited the organisers to Stoke-on-Trent to explain the aims of the organisation and the intentions behind the offending exhibition. See Raymond Plummer, Ch. 2, 'Printing & Pottery: Expansion & Dissent', in *Nothing Need be Ugly,* Design & industries Assn., Surrey, UK, 1985, pp 7-12.

DIA in Britain, the Deutsche Werkbund in Germany and the Svensk Sl_jd. in Sweden, hence its take-up by Heal and Son Ltd.

It is arguable that Wedgwood had less than altruistic reasons for aligning with the design reform lobby. In the early decades of the twentieth century a new kind of 'stripped' classicism in architecture emerged partly as a response to the desire for rational principles for modern buildings.[65] The neo-classicism of the early twentieth century was perceived as being radically different from the historicist revivals of the nineteenth century because it stemmed from and expressed modern rational principles. To many design reformers, Georgian design represented a golden age of restrained taste and was considered the archetype against which the design of contemporary manufactured goods could be judged.[66] It partly explains why Wedgwood adapted its 'Living Tradition' slogan in the 1930s when it embarked on a more intense programme of modernising design. Given the firm's neo-classical heritage there is a degree of opportunism in Wedgwood's support for design reform and the attendant re-working of neo-classical qualities in the design of its early twentieth century products. However, in that same period both the DIA and the Deutsche Werkbund openly advocated the principle of good design as a tool for selling in increasingly competitive world markets.

When the firm experienced the initial onset of the world slump following the Wall Street Crash of 1929 it is notable that Francis Wedgwood sought professional advice about designing for the home market. In 1930, Sir Charles Holmes, a former Director of the National Gallery, was brought in as a consultant.[67] He in turn introduced artists, sculptors and designers to help

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[65] Famed examples were Peter Behren's AEG Turbine Building in Berlin, (1909), Ivor Tengbohm and Gunnar Asplund's civic buildings in Stockholm of the 1920s and in the 1930s, Grey Wornum's new design for the headquarters of RIBA London, c. 1934.

[66] That was certainly the case with W.B. Honey, Keeper of Ceramics at the V&A, who evaluated the Modern designs made at Wedgwood during the 1930s solely in terms of their 18th century antecedents. See W.B. Honey, Ch 4 'Modern Wedgwood Ware', in op.cit. *Wedgwood Ware,* pp 22 – 26.

[67] Batkin, op.cit , *Wedgwood Ceramics,* p. 169.

refocus production towards distinctive but modestly priced lines for the home market. Josiah Wedgwood V continued that practice as part of his second strategy for recovery, that of innovating new and more modern products. The historical record shows that his involvement with design reform went beyond its strategic uptake to benefit his own company. By the middle of the 1930s he had become a spokesman for the pottery industry, especially with regard to arguing the case for progressive approaches to design.[68] Thus although the rationalisation policy introduced by Josiah V substantially reduced the number of new lines, the general recovery programme was underpinned, even driven by a deep commitment to modernising design practices.

This was particularly evident following Goodwin's retirement in 1934, when his role as Art Director passed to Victor Skellern, ARCA whose design training at the Royal College of Art had introduced him to broader principles of designing for industry.[69] A defining feature of Skellern's early years as Art Director was his development of a distinct Modernist aesthetic for decorated wares and tableware based on printed patterns and motifs in contemporary styles. The restrained modernity of the graphic approach to decoration that Skellern established during his Art Directorship from 1934 – 1965 reflected the creative influence of the many leading illustrators and artists that he employed on a freelance basis.[70] Of these the artists Edward Bawden, who taught Skellern

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[68] He was a founder member of the Council for Art and Industry under the Chairmanship of DIA stalwart, Frank Pick that followed on from the Gorrell Report of 1930. On a local level he became Chairman of the North Staffordshire branch of the Society of Industrial Artists (later the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers) in 1934. In the post-war period his interest in industrial design continued at a high level when he was Chairman of the Royal College of Art, London from 1948 – 1949. See John Wedgwood, *A personal life of the fifth Josiah Wedgwood 1899 – 1968,* published by Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. Barlaston, 1979, p.12.

[69] At the RCA, Skellern had worked under the artist Edward Bawden and developed an illustrative approach for printed pattern which he brought with him to his role at Wedgwood. See Batkin, Ch XII, 'Victor Skellern and the Development of Freelance Design During the 1930s', in op.cit, *Wedgwood Ceramics,* p. 167 – 188.

[70] Ibid. Batkin notes that these included Eric Ravilious, Rex Whistler, Edward Bawden, Claire Leighton, Arnold Machin and Richard Guyatt. The last three did no designs for Wedgwood before the Second World War.

at the Royal College of Art in the early 1930s and Eric Ravilious, whom Skellern employed between 1937 and 1939 were particularly instrumental in forming that graphic approach as exemplified in this mug from Ravilious's 'Alphabet' range (see Fig. 3:2)

Fig. 3:2

'Alphabet' mug designed by Eric Ravilious for Wedgwood in 1937

Those new decorated wares co-ordinated well with undecorated ornamental ware by Murray and sculptural pieces by John Skeaping and Alan Best. The emphasis that Skellern placed on printed design (and on improving and developing lithographic printing) was the most significant difference between his Art Direction and that of his predecessor who had expanded hand painted decoration at Wedgwood on a commercial scale.[71] The implications of those key differences in professional design ethos are discussed in Chapter Four, which examines the various conceptualisations of the role of the designer in industry.

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[71] Ibid.

It is important in this discussion about new approaches to design at Wedgwood to emphasise the spirit of collaboration between designers and technical staff, which is particularly evidenced in the technical innovations of Works Manager Norman Wilson.[72] He was a trained ceramist, and like the first Josiah Wedgwood experimented throughout his career with new and improved glazes and bodies. His chief contribution on the creative front in the 1930s was introduction of three new glazed finishes, Satin, Matt and Two-toned slip, two-toned self-coloured earthenware, and a self-coloured China body, Alpine Pink.[73] These were available in a range of subtle and harmonious colours and were so distinctive that they required little or no ornamentation in keeping with Modernist-inspired trends in design. Wilson worked alongside Skellern and other designers (including Keith Murray) to develop new designs. Through collaborations between designers and technical staff, new ranges such as those designed by Murray, were conceived, designed and put into production quickly giving the impression that the Wedgwood range was expanding rather than contracting.

Marketing and promotion

A third and related strategy employed in Wedgwood's regeneration was through promotion and advertising designed to appeal to an increasingly design-conscious middle class home market. The emphasis on Modernist design is clear in Wedgwood's co-ordinated advertising and promotional material of the period, especially in the use of high quality photography and modern

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[72] Norman Wilson (1902 – 1985) joined Wedgwood in 1927 (the same year as Josiah). His appointment as Works Manager was notable because he was young and had relatively little industry experience. That was also the case with Josiah Wedgwood whose postgraduate experience was in lecturing and research. Tom Wedgwood had arrived at the firm after reading English Literature at Cambridge.

[73] See Hensleigh C. Wedgwood, 'The Contributions of Norman Wilson to the Modernisation of Wedgwood in the Twentieth Century', *Wedgwood Review,* (undated copy), pp 160 – 173.(Wedgwood Museum).

sans serif typefaces, as evident in this example (see Fig 3: 3), which shows the first page of a promotional brochure from the mid-1930s.[74]

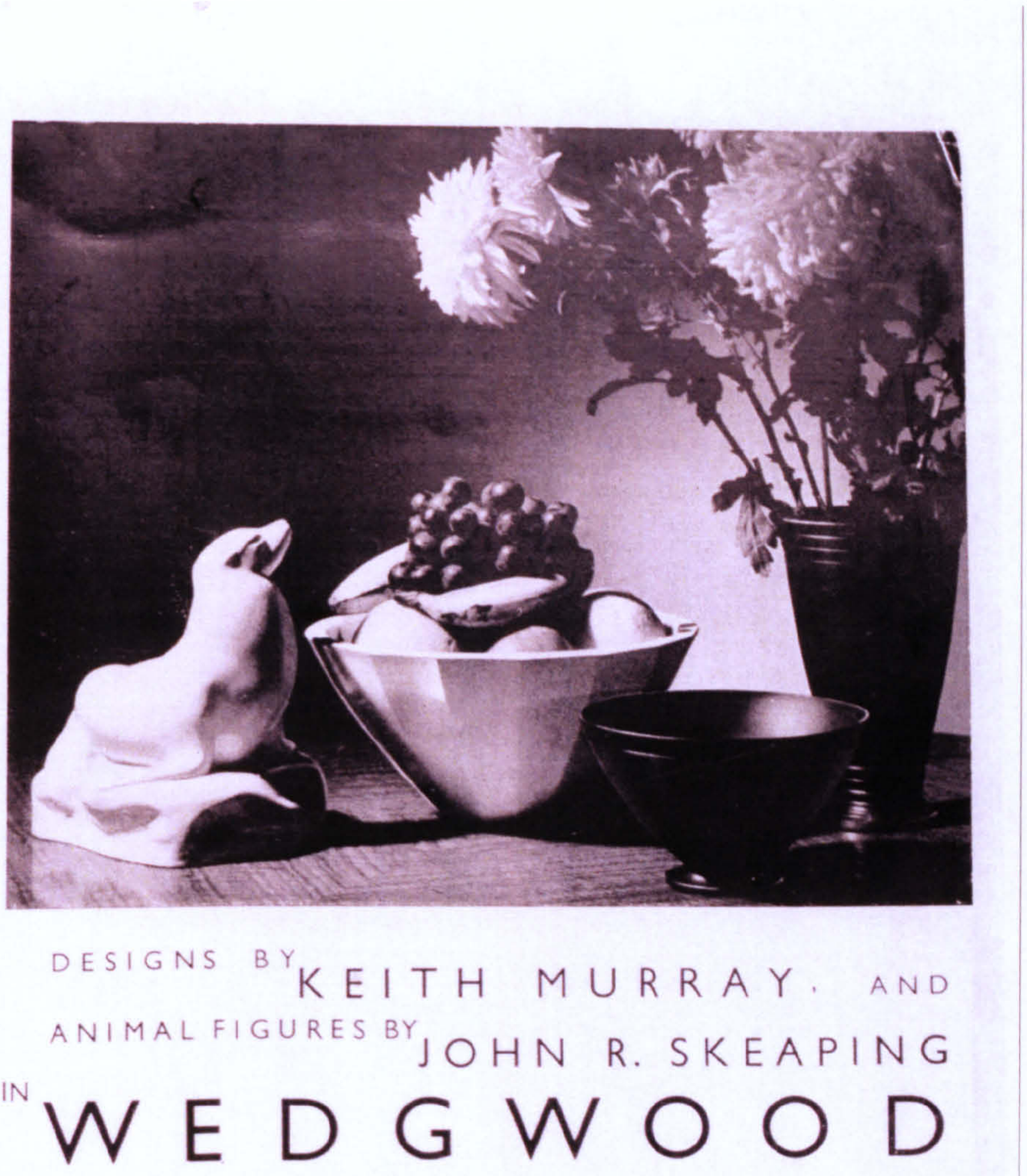

Fig 3:3

Cover page of a promotional brochure showing Wedgwood's Modernist ornamental ranges, c. 1935

[74] The same photograph was used in Wedgwood's press advertising in 1935. This image reappears in a display advertisement in *Studio, Decorative Arts Yearbook,* 1935, facing p. 55

Under Skellern's direction Wedgwood also evolved an effective policy of promoting its progressive design ethos to retailers and to the design conscious public via numerous public and commercial exhibitions throughout the 1930s. Relevant examples of exhibitions featuring 'modern' pottery, glass and metal are discussed in Chapter Four but particular mention should be made here of Wedgwood's own exhibition held in London in 1936. That exhibition, *Wedgwood 1936, was* a pioneering showcase for its updated design policy, indeed the catalogue introduced it as '...the first public display of recent experiments at Etruria'.[75] It featured work by named designers including Murray; however the majority of the work on display was by actual staff members, including Victor Skellern, Millicent Taplin, Star Wedgwood and Norman Wilson. The inclusion of a collection of eighteenth century 'Old Wedgwood', for example undecorated Queensware items and a range of table patterns designed in the eighteenth century and still in production, encouraged connections to be made between Wedgwood's 'golden age' of neo-classicism and its contemporary renaissance as a producer of modern 'classics'. To underline the Modernist image that the firm was keen to convey, Murray also designed the exhibition interior and displays.

Although the graphic style of Wedgwood's advertising emphasised the contemporary modernity of its designs other aspects of its promotional address drew attention to 'traditional' qualities of craftsmanship employed in their manufacture. It is particularly noticeable that at a time when the firm was generally embracing Modernist design as its principal aesthetic mode there was a tendency to assert that its contemporary embrace of modernity was a continuum of the Wedgwood tradition. That was certainly the case with several advertisements for Keith Murray designs, as will be discussed in Chapter Four. Although Wedgwood was tentative about its embrace of Modernism, that discussion also recognises a retention of traditional manufacturing methods at

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[75] *Wedgwood, 1936 Exhibition,* Grafton Galleries, London W1, April 23rd – May 12th, 1936, p. 1 (V&A Library, press mark 200.B.183).

the firm until the 1940s. In that last respect many of the 'modern' designs produced by the firm in the 1930s were principally only modern in style, so it is hardly surprising that its promotional address emphasised 'quality' and 'tradition' in relation to materials and workmanship. However, as this case study of Murray's designs for Wedgwood of that period shows, the modernising of many of Wedgwood's products in the 1930s represented an important interim stage in its longer term strategy for a more programmatic modernisation of its products and its production.

Production and technical developments at the Etruria works in the inter-war period

As the example of the successful Veronese range demonstrated, when Murray began to design his own range for Wedgwood, the firm was already predisposed to a particular brand of Modernism. That Modernism extended beyond aesthetics to a different conception of domestic ceramic ware production. It had evolved a strategy which reflected the shift towards bulk, if not mass production and away from highly elaborate or handicraft styles. The salient points of that approach included i) the commissioning of artists, sculptors and designers to update existing forms and patterns or to create new ones, ii) the close collaboration of the firm's technical and design staff, especially in the development of new bodies and glazes and iii) rationalising its ranges both in terms of restricting the number of shapes and patterns available and promoting the design of new and less elaborate products and designs. However, modernisation on a scale that could compete with advances towards mechanised mass production as practised by some manufacturers in the United States for example, was difficult to achieve in factories built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Wilson argued that before the move to Barlaston there was no mass production at the Etruria works '...except some orders made on a two-shift basis in 1938-

1939'. [76] Prior to that date there was an earlier example of mass production in terms of the size of the order and the time-scale in which it was produced.[77] The scheme was a marketing promotion by Cadbury's whereby consumers of Bournvita would save up labels in return for free beakers and stands designed especially for their favourite beverage.[78] Goodwin, handled the design and development in collaboration with Tom Wedgwood. The resulting designs were simple and elegant and produced in buff coloured earthenware and were undecorated. Over a million beakers and stands were produced between 1934 and 1936, and once the scheme was properly established production of these items alone was required at the rate of 20,000 per week. In order to accommodate such speedy production Wilson introduced flow-line rubber belt production, a practice that originated in the American automobile industry.[79] It was this order more than any other, which came closest to the social ideals of Modern Movement philosophy in that it embodied utilitarian design, mass production and was genuinely aimed at a mass market.[80] However, despite saving the firm from bankruptcy it did not mark a directional shift in Wedgwood's towards cheaper mass produced wares for the general populace.[81]

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[76] Questionnaire to former Wedgwood Works Manager, Norman Wilson, 1983, (Appendix VII).

[77] The order was announced in *Pottery Gazette* as '...the largest order ever placed with an individual firm...', see 'News from the Potteries', *Pottery Gazette & Glass Trades Review,* October 1933, p 1242.

[78] It was so successful that the scheme was extended to include a serving jug, plates and a sugar bowl.

[79] The first enquiry came in on November 13th. 1933 and delivery of the first batch of 8000 sets was scheduled for 15th. February 1934. Wedgwood Museum document: *Notes to Travellers 9th, Feb. 1934*

[80] It is a testament to the quality of these 'give-away' utilitarian wares that many have survived for sixty years or more.

[81] Ironically, the new modern plant at Barlaston had to make even cheaper, utilitarian wares during the Second World War; however that was for war contract work rather than the official 'Utilty' designs designated for domestic use. Gater & Vincent, op.cit. p. 62

Despite that isolated venture into mass production and ongoing development by technical staff, especially Wilson throughout the 1930s, the style of manufacture remained much as it had since the idea of the Etruria works was first conceived in 1766; that is devoted to tableware in bulk and ornamental ware in quite large production runs.[82] When Murray came to work for the firm the age-old process of wheel throwing was still the major forming method and many of his designs were originally manufactured by that method then turned on a lathe to refine the profile. In the nineteenth century both throwing and turning became mechanised to the extent that they were power-driven by machine rather than by the craftsmen and their assistants.[83] Slip casting, a moulding process refined by the first Josiah in the eighteenth century was used to make applied decorations, lids and handles and some complicated shapes.[84] Wilson was constantly refining the technique with a view to cheaper mass production methods but a more automated version was not fully implemented until after the Second World War.[85] Both of these methods were supplemented by (and increasingly replaced by) semi-mechanised shaping methods on jigger and jolley machines.[86]

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[82] Op.cit. Appendix VII.

[83] Josiah Wedgwood I had introduced a form of turning by machine (called Engine Turning) that enabled vertical flutes and cross hatched patterns to be scored onto the unfired body of a pot, but despite its name, it remained a hand-powered method. That decorating technique was revived for some designs in red and black stoneware designed by Murray. Reilly & Savage, op.cit *Dictionary of Wedgwood,* p. 138.

[84] Slip casting involves a liquid clay (called 'slip') being pored into porous moulds made of plaster-of-Paris. The excess moisture is absorbed by the mould and solid residue in the slip sets as a cast, thus forming the object (or more typically sections of it) within the hollow sections of the mould. Murray. Reilly & Savage, op.cit *Dictionary of Wedgwood,* p. 284

[85] See Appendix VII - Interview with Pottery Manager, Harry Walker, (now retired). 21 Feb. 1984. Walker noted that the British Ceramics Research Institute did not acknowledge Wedgwood's pioneering work in this field until after the Second World War, which suggests that the process was not fully operational until the 1940s. Murray made some designs for slip casting in 1933, mainly mugs, jugs and desk sets although according to Norman Wilson they only sold in small quantities, op. cit Appendix VII.

[86] The jigger is a moulding device used mainly for flat ware, especially plates and saucers. A 'bat' of clay is pressed onto an inverted plaster mould that forms the top of the plate whilst it spins. At the same time the underside of the plate is shaped by a profile that cuts through the

The jolley was the most advanced shape-forming machine available at Wedgwood in the 1930s. A semi-automated version was used after the Second World War for mass producing hollow-ware (e.g. cups and bowls), but the technique itself originated in the time of the first Josiah). Harry Walker, who was Pottery Manager at the new Barlaston factory in the 1950s, recalled that after the war when the number of hand throwers was substantially reduced, many of Murray's pre-war designs were formed on a jolley rather than thrown on the wheel. He cited the example of the thrown and turned beer mug, (No. 3810[87]), which he estimated would have originally been produced at the rate of about two hundred a day (without accounting for losses) by a skilled thrower. In the 1950s the same design was made at the Barlaston plant on an automated jolley at the rate of about a thousand a day. Despite the adoption of mass production methods in the forming of the shape, the two bands of turning which comprised the mug's decoration had to be turned by hand on the lathe resulting in a high level of losses.[88]

This is proof that, despite their apparent simplicity, Murray's designs were not conceived with mass production methods in mind nor were they designed with a view to being produced by such methods as and when they became available. Central to understanding the possibilities and limitations that Murray confronted, as a designer of ceramics is an awareness of the production facilities he encountered at Wedgwood. Furthermore comparisons need to be made between facilities at the Etruria works at the time that Murray came to

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clay. A jolley is a moulding device that forms the exterior of a vessel in clay rather than slip on the inside of a revolving mould. The inside of the vessel is formed by a rotating profile that cuts away the clay. It is suited to hollow vessel forms such as cups and bowls. Reilly & Savage, op.cit *Dictionary of Wedgwood,* p. 289

[87] Illustrated in Ch.5, Case Study, I: A

[88] Interview with Harry Walker op.cit. Appendix VIII.

work at the firm and with the modern plant that he helped the firm to conceptualise, plan and build from the middle of the 1930s onwards.

The problems with modernisation at the Wedgwood's Etruria works

It is appropriate to see the first decade of Josiah V's leadership (1930-1940) as a significant transitional period when the firm changed from being a bulk producer of factory ceramics to being a mass producer. Social historians Gater and Vincent stress the significance of the old Etruria works and the paternalistic style of management as the major factors that dictated both production processes and working practices during the interim period. [89] Although its family management was old fashioned, (given that some branches of American industry had, by that time, experienced a half century of scientific man-management), it was clearly not conservative in terms of social or commercial outlook.[90] In similar ways the workforce was not generally resistant to new design idioms or new production methods as long as they served the long-term survival of the firm which, for many Potteries families was a revered institution.[91]

The Etruria works was built in 1769 as a model factory but by the 1930s it had evolved into a warren of workshops, traditional bottle ovens and stores. The site suffered from subsidence and the smoky environment of the Potteries combined with air-borne pollution from nearby heavy industry caused increasing

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[89] For a detailed account of that part of the firm's history see Sharon Gater and David Vincent, *The Factory in a Garden: Wedgwood from Etruria to Barlaston - the transitional years,* University of Keele, Staffs, 1988.

[90] Aside from the Wedgwood family's competent involvement at the Etruria works in the sales room and the board room, the shop floor and the design studio, individual Director's involvement, both personal and semi-professional, with workers' housing; workers' welfare; sports and social facilities; etc. is documented in the firm's archives relating to the planning and building of the new plant at Barlaston, c 1935 – 1949. (Wedgwood Museum).

[91] Gate & Vincent discuss three specific aspects of the paternalistic style that characterised Wedgwood's management in the 1930s and their benefits in terms of promoting a sense of collective endeavour with its workforce. These were: the system of recruiting new staff; involvement in worker's and ex-workers welfare and the organisation of collective social and commemorative events. Op.cit pp. 15 - 25

problems with 'specking' when firing the glazed wares. Innovations in British domestic ceramic manufacture were largely focussed on the introduction of new machinery to make production more streamlined and/or cleaner which improved over-all efficiency.[92] That was addressed by the firm as early as 1927 by replacing the traditional bottle ovens with oil-fired tunnel kilns for biscuit firing and for glost and enamel firing.[93] In the 1920s Wedgwood had installed the first electric enamel kiln in the industry and was also the first British manufacturer to install an oil-fired tunnel kiln for glost firing in 1931.[94] The new tunnel kilns, through which goods were conveyed on heatproof trolleys during the firing process, required a constant supply of wares for firing or glazing rather than a stockpile as in the old days. Tunnel kilns were thus more integrated both into the factory layout and also into the sequence of manufacturing processes, but to run them as productively as possible meant that throughput has to be maintained at a constant level.[95]

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[92] The firing of wares in coal-fuelled bottle kilns continued on a large scale up to the Second World War and the air pollution it caused affected production quality (by causing 'specking' on pots) even where manufacturers had invested in cleaner oil or gas fired kilns for their own production. Gater & Vincent, op cit. p. 39.

[93] Earthenware goods are fired after the clay is shaped (the 'biscuit' stage) to make them hard enough for glazing. The glazed wares are subsequently fired (the 'glost' firing) to harden the glaze. Some wares that are painted overglaze with enamels are fired in smaller enamel kilns, sometimes referred to as 'muffle' ovens. The order of firing for ceramic bodies in terms of temperature from the highest downwards is: porcelains, stoneware and bone china; earthenware (in the unglazed state); glazes on biscuit fired wares; enamel on over glazed ware. See Reilly & Savage, op.cit. *Dictionary of Wedgwood.* p..284

[94] Hensleigh C. Wedgwood, 'The Contribution of Norman Wilson to the Modernization of Wedgwood in the Twentieth Century', *Wedgwood Review,* (no date but ex Wedgwood archive and post 1961) pp 160 – 173.

[95] The old system of firing in the distinctive bottle ovens was physically removed from the main factory workshop areas. Pots were placed in saggars that were positioned in the kiln by the firemen prior to firing, (Saggars are clay boxes in that were used to hold and protect unfired wares in the kiln. They were designed to be stackable and hence enable the old bottle kilns to be filled efficiently and avoid damage to the pots throughout the process of stacking, firing and unpacking.) After the firing period the wares were allowed to cool and then the kiln was unpacked and the goods inspected before being sent back to the main factory for further processing.

Gater and Vincent's study provide a perceptive insight into how the new automated tunnel kilns caused problems of their own for the operatives because the factory floors at Etruria were uneven due to ground subsidence.[96] A maintenance worker recalled how the tracks sagged and buckled causing frequent derailments of the trolleys and how sloping floors caused the trolleys to pile up in the tunnels.[97] That example demonstrates why modernisation at the Etruria works had necessarily remained at an interim stage.

Wedgwood's competitors were faced with the same problems as regards making production more efficient and cleaner but manufacturers such as Royal Doulton and Minton did not have such archaic factory layouts to contend with.[98] Minton probably went the furthest down the line of modernising its production in the early 1930s.[99] Its modernisation programme, completed in 1934, suggests that its directors had methodically analysed key areas of production and decoration and had re-planned the works along rational lines to promote productivity and a more efficient workflow.[100] Like Wedgwood, they were faced with updating an old factory but their solution was to build a new five-storey steel framed extension with an open ground floor to enable

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[96] Gater & Vincent, op cit. This study documented the conditions at the old Etruria works in the period between the wars and the consequent decision to rebuild the factory on the present green-field site at Barlaston. Much of their research comprised of oral histories and oral interviews with former workers.

[97] Former Wedgwood worker, Claude Walker observed that to control an even flow of wares through the tunnel ovens in these difficult conditions "... needed a very clever fireman to decide how to manipulate them." Gater & Vincent, op cit. p.39.

[98] For example, in 1933 the Royal Doulton Factory was reported as installing a continuously firing circular oven for biscuit wares that moved goods through its 240 ft circuit on its own railway track. Wedgwood could not have installed such a large and complex oven because of the small size of its workshops and its uneven (and unstable) floors at the old Etruria works. See 'Recent Developments at the Royal Doulton Factory' *PGGTR*, April 2 1933, pp 489 – 492.

[99] See ' Developments at the Minton Pottery' , *PGGTR*, September 1 1933, pp 1087 -8

[100] Ibid. The scale and rigour of the modernising scheme suggests that Minton had applied American-style scientific management methods in their analysis and planning process.

continuous glost firing and a suite of studios on the top floor.[101] It is evident that few British pottery manufacturers could afford to make such a large capital outlay on their premises and machinery during that difficult decade. However, in the context of this discussion about modernisation at Wedgwood, it is important to note that Minton's objectives were to improve the efficiency of existing methods of high quality bone china production rather than to facilitate modern mass production methods.[102]

Josiah Wedgwood V and the decision to build the new factory

The decision to transform Wedgwood into a model mass producer of pottery indicates the progressive vision that Josiah Wedgwood V, (1899 – 1968), who was a trained economist, brought to the firm. His son, John Wedgwood described how his father made the difficult decision to close down the Etruria factory and re-build at Barlaston by learning from the ethos and ideas that his forefather Josiah Wedgwood I had acted upon. He recalled:

> 'He saw what had previously not been perceived, that the first Josiah was never bound by tradition, but was always prepared to alter and adapt, even if it meant a major move. ...A new Etruria was needed. Josiah V took a lesson from Josiah I and decided to move the factory to an entirely new site.' [103]

However, to see only commercial modernising tendencies in that policy is to overlook the pivotal importance of the growing consciousness of the Wedgwood tradition that underpinned the ideals of its young management team and perhaps none more so than Josiah V.[104] It is likely that his awareness of

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[101] Ibid. The improvements involved replanning production areas around newly-installed tunnel kilns; resiting and modernising the enamel kiln; and relocating the hand-painting studios.

[102]The planned benefit of the new top-lit painting studios for example was presumably conceived in terms of improved colour accuracy, speed and finesse on the part of the decorators.

[103] Josiah V's son, Dr John Wedgwood published a posthumous account of his father's life, which gives some insight into the attitudes and beliefs of this important man (as well as his achievements). See John Wedgwood, *A personal life of the fifth Josiah Wedgwood 1899 – 1968,* published by Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. Barlaston, 1979, p.12.

[104] The irony of his privileged position and (at the same time) its perilous status would not have been lost on this intelligent and questioning man. Prior to taking up a position in the family

personal privilege motivated his overwhelming sense of duty to ensure the survival of the family firm and the maintenance of the extended family - the loyal workforce that constituted a heritage of craft skills.[105] Indeed the 'sense of family' which characterised labour relationships at the firm was maintained throughout the worst years of the firm's slump and persisted into the Barlaston Period.[106] Yet, in the course of a decade, modern production methods were adopted wholesale and the firm was physically relocated on a green field site outside the city.[107]

Planning and building the new plant at Barlaston

The new factory and site was conceived along philanthropic lines, with on-site facilities for workers' recreation and welfare (including a medical centre) and housing for 100 families on an estate designed by the Garden City architect, Louis de Soissons.[108] Given the scale of the project it is a mark of Murray's

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firm, Josiah V had studied for a BSc at the London School of Economics. His thesis, *The Economics of Inheritance*, emanated from his liberal perceptions of his own privileged family background. He contended that inherited wealth gave the recipient an advantage in terms of business and professional advancement and that such advantage was compounded in succeeding generations i.e. that wealth and influence could be multiplied. The thesis was an argument for capital taxes. It is ironic that it was published in the year before his own 'accident of birth' as a male in the sixth generation of the Wedgwood 'dynasty', catapulted him to the position of Managing Director of a failing family company. Josiah Wedgwood, *The Economics of Inheritance,* Routledge 1929. Published with an acknowledgement to his supervisor at the LSE, the economist R.H.Tawney.

[105]In oral historical accounts former Wedgwood employees interviewed by Gater & Vincent frequently used the metaphor of 'family' when recollecting their working years at Etruria (despite the redundancies and fundamental changes which recession and modernisation imposed). See Gater & Vincent, op cit. pp 31 -2.

[106] The term 'Barlaston Period' refers to the period from 1940, when production was shifted to the new factory at Barlaston. That was not a wholesale move as production (but not decorating) of bone china continued at Etruria until 1949, when the second phase of the factory was completed. The Etruria works finally closed in 1951.

[107] The planning process began in 1935; plans were drawn up in 1936; land purchase at Barlaston was finalised in 1937; the foundation stone of the new factory was laid in 1938 and the earthenware factory on the new site at Barlaston went into production by 1940. China production remained at Etruria until after the war when the new bone-china factory was completed in 1949. See Reilly & Savage, op.cit. *Dictionary of Wedgwood.* p. 32.

[108] Louis de Soissons, ARCA, FRIBA, had worked under the social reformer, Ebenezer Howard in planning and design housing at Welwyn Garden City.(begun in 1919). The housing

standing with the Wedgwood management that he was appointed as architect for the new factory and offices as he had not been involved in architectural design since the 1920s.[109]

In contrast to the philanthropic ethos that underpinned the broad planning of the 'factory in a garden' the production plant and administration built to house 700 employees was a model of rational planning and Modern design, (see architect's drawing in Fig. 3:4). As with the great automobile plants in the U.S.A it was designed so that raw materials could arrive at the plant by train and transformed through a series of processes into finished goods that were transported away from the factory by lorry.[110] It was designed from the outset to be powered by electricity so it had only modern electrified tunnel kilns (six in all, one being 273 feet long) which were integrated into the open plan layout of the factory.[111]

As part of the planning and specification process, Murray had travelled with Tom Wedgwood and Norman Wilson to factories in Switzerland, Italy and the USA to look at modern ceramic factories and equipment. A major decision was to invest in the most advanced Swiss-made Brown-Boveri tunnel kilns, and to use them for biscuit firing of earthenware pots; the first such use in a British ceramic factory. Goods moved through these ovens without needing to be

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at Barlaston was designed on a garden village principle; surrounded by farmland, parkland and sports grounds. Unfortunately, due in particular to war-time restrictions, only 20 houses were built in the first phase. They were retained for employees with specific duties for whom it was essential to live near the factory. Thus the planned mixed community at Barlaston never materialised. See Gater & Vincent, op cit. *The Factory in a Garden,* pp. 52 – 54.

[109] Murray formed a partnership with an older architect, C.S. White in 1936, presumably on the recommendation of Wedgwood. His architectural work for Wedgwood was conducted separately to his design work for the firm. Correspondence was addressd to Murray and White of Grafton Street, London (the same road as the firm's London office). (Wedgwood Museum.)

[110] The Barlaston site had a major railway line running through it and it was allowed its own station when the factory was built. That was the prime mode of transport for the majority of the workforce.

[111] The plant generated much of its own electricity in a power-house designed by Murray and White.

packed in saggars, which considerably streamlined the firing process in terms of saving time, space and labour.[112]

The resulting factory building had a reinforced concrete frame with brick infill. It was glazed on the north side from bench height to roof, giving exceptional lighting for painting and finishing work. The entire factory benefited from top lighting via an innovatory monitor roof.[113] Yet, despite the most modern equipment, the most advanced aspects of the new plant (and those which effected the biggest economies and/or increases in efficiency) were i) cleaner air because of electric power, ii) the savings in time, kiln space and labour in tunnel ovens and iii) the system of conveyors for moving pots and materials around the factory. It was Murray's planning skills as an architect and his knowledge of production stages as a designer in that industry that enabled the attention to detail which made the factory so pleasant and efficient.[114]

If the building style of the factory was characterised as functionalist, Murray and White's first design for the adjoining administration block bore the hallmarks of International Style architecture (see Fig. 3:5). Significant details are its light-coloured exterior, low-level horizontal block form, glazed stair tower, horizontal bands of continuous fenestration and the modern lettering on the facade.

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[112] In the old bottle ovens, items for firing had to be placed in clay boxes (or saggars) and then stacked in the kiln. This involved three processes for the firemen: packing, stacking and unpacking. As well as taking up time, the saggars took up space in the kiln and extra space on the factory floor or in the yard outside of the bottle oven (required to enable the packing and unpacking of items for firing). It was therefore difficult to maintain continuous production when a delay in any one of those processes may have caused hold ups and delayed the next firing session.

[113] The monitor roof (a series of raised rectangular roof sections) had infilled top (horizontal) surfaces and was glazed on the vertical sides only to a height of 143 cms. above the lower roof level.

[114] A useful article about the plant and buildings with technical specifications, plans and photographs is 'New factory at Barlaston, Staffs for Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd.', *The Architect and Building News,* 25 June, 1943, pp 202 – 207.

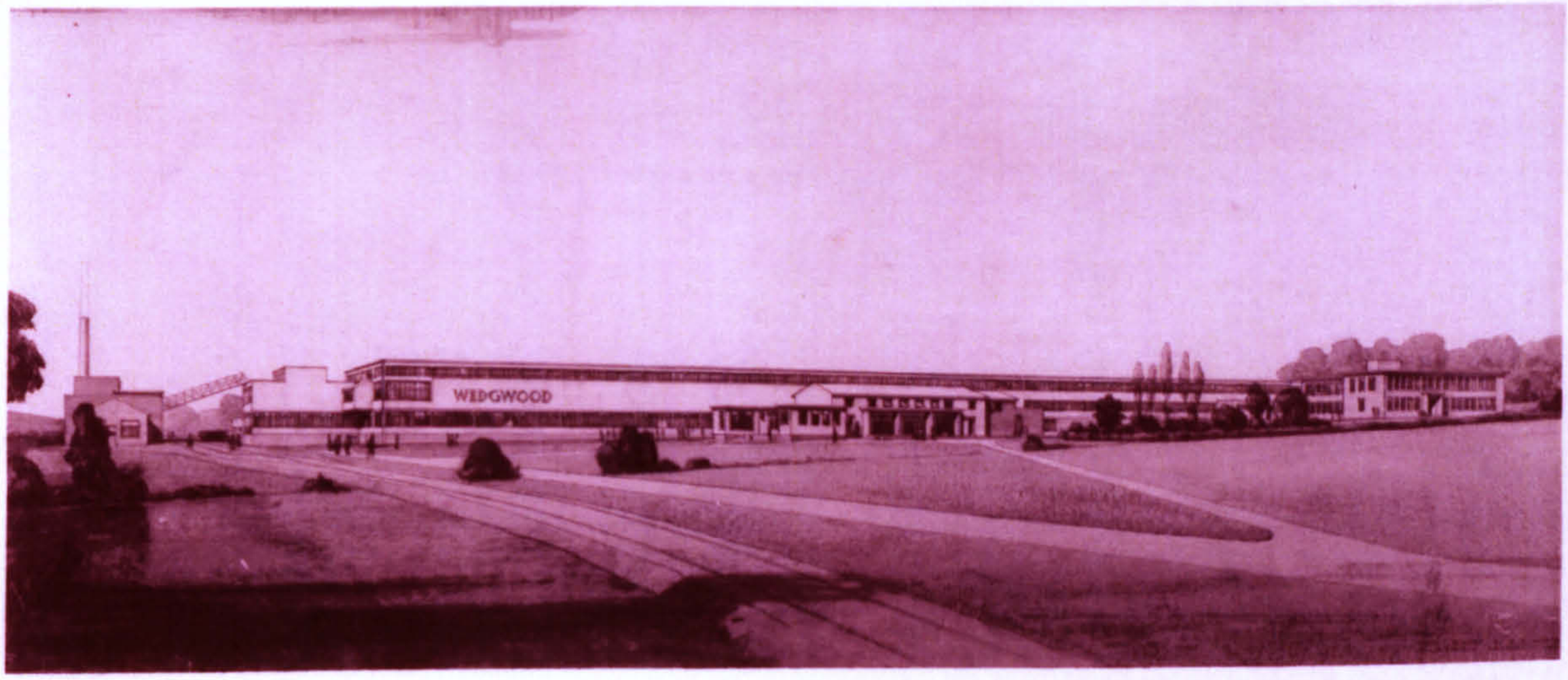

Fig. 3:4

Keith Murray and C.S, White's architectural rendering of the proposed Wedgwood Plant at Barlaston, Staffs. c.1936[115].

Fig 3:5

Detail of Murray's first International Style design for the administration block c.1936

Murray's rendering of the first design for the administration building showed that, despite his absence from architectural practice, he was capable of working

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[115] Note the rail track running to the left of the factory and the power-house next to the track on the extreme left. The brick administration block (as built) is to the extreme right. In front of the factory is the separate canteen building

with flair in the most advanced style of the time. That particular version was dropped in favour of a less expensive and more utilitarian brick building with standard metal-framed windows and a discreet stone porch. Thus it had more in common with Dutch and Swedish-inspired versions of 'Red-brick Modernism' as endorsed by the DIA in the early 1930s.

After the laying of the foundation stone at the new Barlaston factory site in 1938, Josiah V wrote to his workforce: '...the Wedgwood tradition prescribes a duty to the future as well as to the past generations, and the new venture is being launched with confidence on a rising tide.' [116] This defining act marked the end of the transitional phase in which he, above all of his fellow directors, had clung to the idea of Wedgwood as a family tradition in order to shape its future.[117] In that passage the metaphor of the family is exchanged for that of the ship being launched. In that respect the naval metaphor, which pictured the firm tightly unified and not merely afloat but newly launched, was more appropriate. Hidden within that metaphor is a vision of himself at the helm, a modern 'Captain of Industry' rather than *pater familias*, similarly inspired by duty but also professionally trained for leadership. The inference of a metaphorical rising tide is optimistic and also dynamic. He clearly envisaged a fuller engagement with the principles of Modernism that advocated mass production by mechanised methods as a moral as well as a commercial imperative. When the Barlaston plant was fully operational, that is from approximately 1948, those principles became a commercial reality for the firm.

It is perhaps ironic that Murray was only involved in one ceramic project after the Second World War which allowed him to design for the new production

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[116] Gater & Vincent, op cit. *The Factory in a Garden,* p.8.

[117] John Wedgwood op cit. p. 12. John Wedgwood recalled that his father treasured his copies of Meteyard's *Life of Josiah Wedgwood* and edited volumes of the first Josiah's letters, which were frequently annotated in his handwriting. He argued that his father took account of the first Josiah's insistence upon innovation over tradition when he made the crucial decision to move from Etruria.

facilities that he had in part created. Production of many of Murray's designs continued at the Barlaston factory into the 1950s and as we have seen, some designs were adapted by the works managers to be produced by more modern methods. However, the majority of Murray's designs for ceramics originated between 1932 and 1938 and were created for the production facilities available at the Etruria works.

Part 3: Keith Murray at Wedgwood

Appointment and working arrangements

In 1932 Keith Murray was offered the prospect of freelance design work and was invited to visit the Etruria, works to familiarise himself with production methods.[118] Arrangements were formalised early in 1933, when Murray was engaged to work for Wedgwood for two months per year for a fixed fee plus royalties on designs produced.[119] It is recorded in the firm's correspondence that the fee was for the equivalent of two months work per year.[120] The exact remuneration paid to Murray is not certain, although Wilson believed that it was £500 per annum.[121] More noteworthy is the fact that, unlike Stevens & Williams, Wedgwood paid him royalties for his designs.[122]

'Annular' Ware

In October 1932 (prior to his formal appointment), Murray designed two vegetable dishes for the 'Annular' range, which was being developed by Goodwin and his team at Wedgwood in collaboration with the retailers Rouard of Paris.[123] The horizontally-ribbed profile of 'Annular', bore the hallmarks of a self-conscious Modernism, and stylistically, was a radical departure for the firm, (see Fig. 3:6). Although the design concept of the 'Annular' shape was not originated by Murray, it is possible to see in it the antecedents of his own

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[118] He was introduced to Josiah Wedgwood V, by Felton Wreford, manager of Wedgwood's London showrooms According to Batkin, this came about as a result of an initial introduction by Marriot Powell, director of James Powell and Sons (Whitefriars) Glass Ltd.. See Batkin, op cit. p.205

[119] Ibid. Batkin mistakenly claimed that he was paid for three months.

[120] Letter from J. Wedgwood, dated 10th August 1933.(Wedgwood Museum)

[121] Interview Wilson op cit. Appendix VII,

[122] Murray received royalties for shapes that he designed even if they were decorated and sold as a specific pattern (i.e. not with a Keith Murray or KM backstamp) as was the case with a covered bowl that became a standard gift line and remained in production into the 1980s.

[123] The relationship with the French retailing firm, Rouard dated back to the early years of Goodwin's Art Directorship. He had initially introduced a new stripped-classical aesthetic in his tableware commissioned by Rouard c 1905.

Modernist approach to design which placed emphasis on form rather than decoration and also shared its aesthetics, especially its emphatic horizontal profile and smooth, light surface finish.

PLATE 512. *Annular* teaset made for the Royal Institute of British Architects, *c.* 1936.

Annular tablewares were also made with painted decoration including graded coloured lines or lustre.

Fig 3:6

Plate showing items from 'Annular' service originally designed by John Godwin and Tom Wedgwood c. 1932

Murray's Designs for Wedgwood, c 1933 - 1948

Murray's approach to designing at Wedgwood was similar to his arrangements at Stevens & Williams. According to former Design Studio manager, Arthur Moore, Murray made detailed drawings for new shapes in his London studio which he brought up to Etruria on his regular visits.[124] At the Etruria works, he

[124] Arthur Moore's comments were taken from a published review of the 1976 retrospective exhibition, 'Keith Murray Designs in Travelling exhibition', *Wedgwood Review,* 1976 (reference incomplete) Wedgwood Museum.

oversaw the prototyping of his designs by the throwers and turners. Moore recalled that the designer was very attentive and responsive to the comments of the skilled craftsmen during that stage. Murray's ceramics were marked with a facsimile signature until 1934 (See Fig 3:7), when a monogrammed 'KM' back stamp was introduced.[125] That was modified in 1940 to include 'of Etruria and Barlaston' around the monogram.[126]

Fig 3:7

Underside of Keith Murray beer mug showing the first back stamp with facsimile signature, indicating that it was manufactured c 1932 -4.

[125] Batkin claims that the facsimile signature backstamp was first introduced in 1932. See Batkin, op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* p. 228 Whilst that may have been the case, the first entry I have found for it in the firm's *Engraving: Backstamp, Monogram and Crest Book* (dating from 12th October 1927) was dated 16th June, 1933. I concur with her date for the introduction of the monogrammed backstamp as there is an entry for it on 29th October 1934. (Wedgwood Museum)

[126] Batkin, op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* p. 228.

The designs Murray made at Wedgwood in the 1930s fit into five broad categories: creamware and matt glazed earthenware; red stoneware and Black and Bronze Basalt bodies; two-tone slip ware; patterned tableware; and Norman Wilson 'Unique' pieces. The latter were one-of-a kind pieces created in collaboration with the Works Manager who experimented with bodies and glaze effects. The first category was by far the largest and can be further subdivided by product type; ornamental wares: home accessories including drinking sets, cocktail sets and coffee sets (which, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century would have been subsumed under the title 'useful wares').

Cream-coloured and matt glazed earthenware

The received understanding is that Murray made his first designs, characterised by an absence of applied ornament and an emphasis on form, in order to exploit Wedgwood's new Matt glazes.[127] Batkin clearly made that same presumption when she wrote: 'He then developed with extraordinary speed a series of functional vases, jugs, bowls and tableware which were conceived on architectural lines...and designed to make the best use of the new matt glazes then being created at Etruria by Norman Wilson'.[128] Wilson's recollections suggested that the ornamental potential of the matt glazes had not then been realised and that first 'Keith Murray' designs for Wedgwood were for the cream-coloured earthenware. He recalled:

> 'Keith Murray designed his first shapes in plain cream colour with the normal shiny glaze. The clean cut architectural shapes were attractive but real popularity came when the shapes were produced in the matt glazes...'[129]

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[127] These glazes are variously called 'Matt', 'Mono' and 'Siennese' and the colours in the range: two shades of green, Matt Straw (pale golden yellow), Moonstone (soft white) and the rarer shades of duck egg blue, turquoise and Elephant Grey are subject to the same inconsistencies of naming except for the matt white glaze which is almost invariably called 'Moonstone'.

[128] Batkin, op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* p. 205

[129] Interview with Norman Wilson op cit. Appendix VII.

By June 1933, the range was extended and most of the pieces began to be produced with new matt glazes developed by Wilson. [130] The matt glazes were developed for the 'Annular' table service which was available in Moonstone, Matt Straw or Matt Green glazes. However, there were constant problems with the matt glazes on tableware which could not be overcome, hence they were subsequently reserved for ornamental items and drinking sets.

Fig. 3:8
Thrown and turned ornamental designs in earthenware with a Norman Wilson Matt Green glaze, all designed c. 1933 -5

It is evident that the matt glazes transformed Murray's excellent forms from well made but utilitarian products to objects of aesthetic beauty, (see Fig. 3:8). Thus the possibility arises that Murray was initially employed to update the inexpensive creamware body in order to give it a contemporary appeal. That argument accords with other aspects of the modernising project at Wedgwood

[130] A reason for that confusion could be that the first public display of Murray's designs in June 1933 at the British Industrial Art in Relation to the Home Exhibition, Dorland Hall, London, featured two Keith Murray bowls with a grey matt glaze (Elephant Grey) and a beer jug and mug with a 'Buff' (probably Matt Straw) glaze. (Exhibition Catalogue)

in the 1930s that were focussed on the less affluent domestic market at home.[131] If it were the case that Murray's early designs pre-date the matt glazes and were made without an understanding of their aesthetic potential, then the role that Wilson played in the early development of the Keith Murray range must be revaluated.

The discussion above provides an insight into the hitherto mysterious process whereby designs by Murray (and other artists and designers) were 'produced' in particular finishes (and subsequently in other bodies and finishes) by Wedgwood.[132] Wilson is consistently conceded to have played some part in the recovery of Wedgwood in the1930s and his successful experimentation with glazes and new bodies is understood to have been a key factor but the emphasis on the role of the artist or designer in most written accounts of the period implies that the designer's role was both seminal and singular. Analysis of the primary sources suggests that a collaborative relationship between Murray and technical staff at Wedgwood was instigated as soon as a Keith Murray range became a possibility.[133] The fact that so many of Murray's original shapes that were associated with cream ware and then the matt glazes reappear in subsequent shape books devoted to Basalt wares and Two-toned Slip wares is evidence of a particular collaborative approach within which Murray's shapes

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[131] Cream coloured earthenware, the basic product upon which Wedgwood's original commercial success was founded, was inexpensive and suited to large-scale production and consequently for cheaper wares.

[132] One example would be new versions in matt glazes and Norman Wilson 'Unique' glaze effects of animal figures designed by the sculptor, John Skeaping after 1933. The original pieces were designed in 1928 and had been produced in cream glazed earthenware or Black basalt bodies until 1933.

[133] Indicative of that was a promotional event to promote the Keith Murray range in 1933, an *Exhibition of New Wedgwood Shapes Designed by Keith Murray* held at the John Lewis department store in Oxford Street, London. Although the exhibition mainly featured matt glazed wares and basalt production lines it also showcased experimental pieces, Norman Wilson 'Unique' pieces and limited ranges in fine stoneware designed by or in collaboration with Murray. Such an exhibition could only have arisen out of a collaborative creative and technical partnership.

were creatively evaluated (or even interpreted) by leading technicians at the firm.[134]

Matt glazed ornamental designs

The principal ornamental items in the Keith Murray range consisted of vases and bowls and platters in a choice of matt colours on earthenware which gave the impression of an extensive choice. Shapes were simple, and tended towards the geometric and ornament, if found at all, was restricted to broad flutes and turned concentric rings, as in the examples of bowls and vases perceptible in Fig. 3: 8. Despite the Modernist aesthetic of the Keith Murray range, the majority of the pieces were made by handicraft methods, especially wheel throwing and turning on a lathe. It was in such designs, following on from the hand painted Veronese range, that the break from the Victorian Art Pottery tradition was most effectively marked.

Murray's designs were undecorated but eminently 'modern' and stylish thus they were not cheaper utilitarian substitutes for Art Pottery but in a different category altogether. In terms of price, a thrown and turned Keith Murray vase with a 'modern' matt glazed finish cost less than £1.00; that is over four times cheaper than an elaborately decorated *Fairyland Lustre* bowl cost in the 1920s but it was still three times more expensive than some of Wedgwood's competitors' lines.[135] A significant factor relating to the difference in price between Murray's designs and cheaper lines was the cost of hand manufacture, attributable to wheel throwing, turning on the lathe and hand finishing. Thus,

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[134] For example a globular vase, shape no. 3801, dating from 1933 and subsequently reappeared in the *Shape Book 5*, c. 1938 as shape no. 4197 in a two-coloured slip version of the original.
There is no documented evidence of Murray being asked specifically to design for one body or glaze finish, so it is possible that he designed general shapes and possibly collaborated with Norman Wilson and Tom Wedgwood as to which particular finish certain pieces would be available in.

[135] The catalogue to the *Everyday Things* exhibition, at the R.I.B.A., London, 1937 listed a 10 inch matt glazed case designed by Murray for 18s.6d (92 _ p) and an inexpensive (but well-designed) vase by Wedgwood's close competitor, Royal Doulton for 3s 6d. (17 _ p.). pp 74 -81.

although some items by Keith Murray were genuinely inexpensive, (in c. 1933 a small vase could be purchased for 5s 9d) for the most part it is only accurate to say that they were less expensive than traditional ornamental wares.[136]

Inexpensive Home Accessories

Pressure was on, especially in the first few years that Murray worked for Wedgwood to get prices down by using bulk production methods and simplifying designs. Murray was involved with certain attempts to produce cheaper items at Wedgwood by experimenting with less hand-intensive techniques, especially slip casting. His slip-cast designs were initially for simple domestic accessories such as ash-trays, cigarette boxes and inkstands, all undecorated and in the same matt glazes as the more expensive thrown and turned pieces.(See Fig.3:9 which shows a page from a promotional brochure with both thrown and turned bowls and slip cast desk accessories and cigarette boxes.)

Historically, the concept of stylish but simple home accessories was a feature of Wedgwood's eighteenth century neo-classical design output but they were also part of a broader drive to diversify ceramic production away from tableware. Murray's designs, produced at a time when the firm was keen to establish a new take-up amongst a younger, less wealthy and more modern clientele, were ideally placed as extension lines. Items could be bought individually as low-key accessories that co-ordinated with modern décor. In addition to fashionable young home owners, such useful but stylish items had an appeal in the growing gift market as witnessed on an annual basis in Heal and Son's illustrated Christmas gift brochures.

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[136] Illustrated and detailed in Wedgwood brochure promoting the new Keith Murray range, c. 1933. (Wedgwood museum).

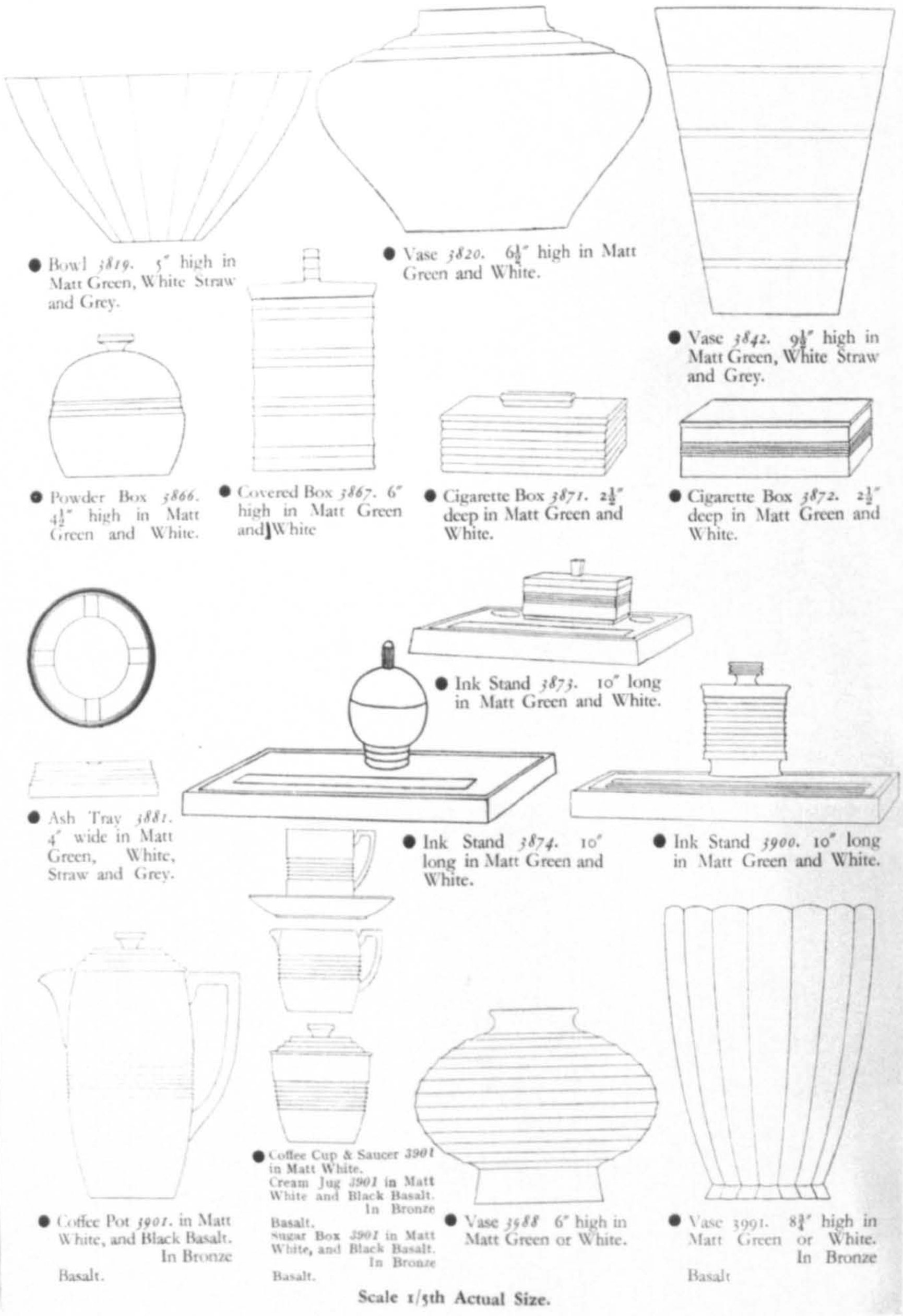

Fig 3: 9

Page from Wedgwood promotional brochure, c.1936 showing both thrown and turned pieces (vases and coffee set) as well as home accessories made by the slip casting method (ash tray, cigarette box and inkstands).

In 1934, Murray's designed several drinking mugs to be made by the slip-cast method, which retailed at approximately half the retail price of the thrown and turned style (3810) praised by Herbert Read. Those particular designs are

discussed and analysed in Case Study II in Chapter 5. They can be seen as part of the drive to deliver lower-priced goods for the home along with other designs by Murray such as matching beaker and jug sets for beer, lemonade and even cocktail sets as exemplified in Fig 3:10

- Wedgwood make Cocktail Cups in several original designs—here are two of the newest. The perfect balance of the Cups on the left is typical of Keith Murray's work—notice the clever fluting of the base. This set (*3999*) is made in green matt-glaze. On the right is a group of Moonstone (matt white) Cups, based with rings of silver (*4001*).

3999 *4001*

- This thrown and turned Keith Murray design (*3802*) shows up tall flowers or leaf sprays to perfection. The vase stands nine inches high, and it is made in straw matt glaze.

3802 (*in Straw or Grey*).

Fig 3:10

Page from Wedgwood promotional brochure, c.1936 showing both two types of cocktail cups (3999 in Matt Green and 4001 in Moonstone with platinum lines on the foot), both designed c. 1935 and thrown and turned vase (3802) designed c. 1933.

The earthenware drinking sets whether for beer, cocktails or coffee were not strictly tableware but neither were they purely ornamental lines. The set, which was available in Moonstone and Black Basalt (and also a more expensive version with platinum trim on Moonstone), was not an extension of a tableware range, (see Fig. 3:11). [137] However, it was designed to co-ordinate with other 'home accessories' in the Keith Murray range such as the cocktail cups and vase illustrated in Fig 3:10.

Fig. 3:11

Coffee set in Moonstone with a band of turned concentric rings for ornament. Shape no. 3901 designed c.1933

[137] The thrown and turned coffee service (Shape no. 3901) was designed c. 1933. The coffee pot cost 24s. (£1.20).

Basalt and stoneware bodies

The discussion above that attempted to distinguish a new category of domestic ceramic items that was not strictly tableware or ornamental but which I am calling 'home accessories' could arguably be extended to most of the designs that Murray made for Wedgwood, even those that did not attempt to use less expensive methods and materials. That would apply to the designs made by Murray for the Wedgwood's black stoneware body; Black Basalt and a rarer version in a copper colour invented by Wilson called Bronze Basaltes.[138] Murray's simple shapes proved to be an excellent match for the stark severity of the dark stoneware bodies and Murray was encouraged to design some items, mainly vases and bowls, exclusively for the Basalt body. Murray's designs for the Basalt bodies are amongst his most severe shapes for ceramics. (See Fig 3:12)

They were mostly made by traditional throwing and turning methods (as were many of original eighteenth century 'Basaltes' wares) but aside from the austere character and elegant proportions of his Modernist versions, he did not base them on classical forms or neo-classical ornament. For a small number of Basalt designs the eighteenth century engine-turning method of decoration was revived as can be seen on the first and third items on the bottom row of Fig.3:12, (shape nos. 3884 & 3880). Just discernible on those two beakers is a herring-bone pattern on the turned bands, achieved by engine turning. In addition to the basalt bodies, a few of Murray's early designs were made in an unglazed red stoneware body revived and refined by Wilson, although these were not widely available.

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[138] Called after 'Basaltes', a black stoneware body invented by Josiah I and used for busts and ornamental items such as vases and urns in the neo-classical style.

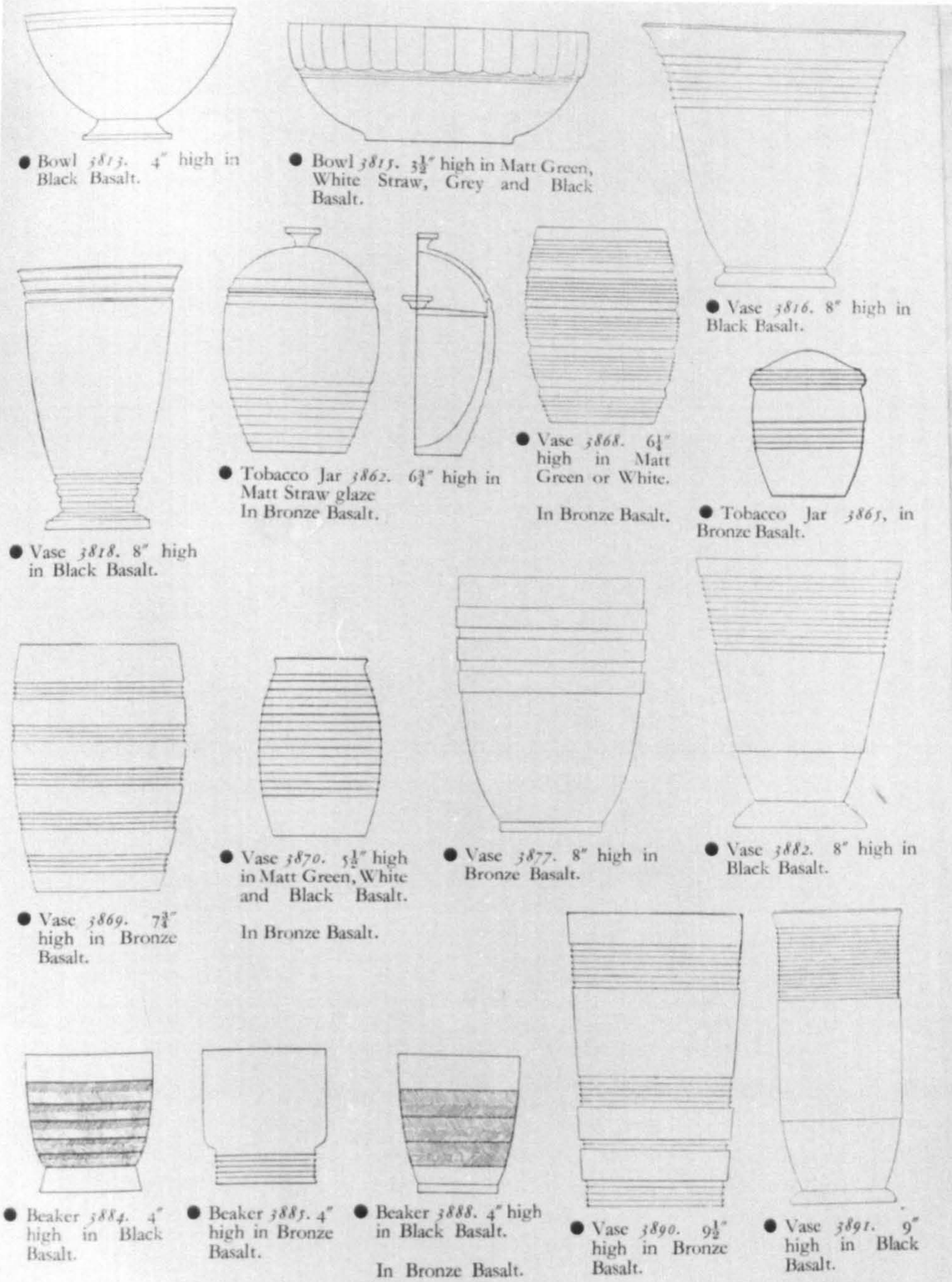

Fig 3:12

Page from Wedgwood promotional brochure, c.1936 showing a range of thrown and turned vases, bowls and lidded jars designed for the basalt and stoneware bodies. Some of the items (e.g vases 3868 and 3870) were also available in the Matt glazed finish and were not designed exclusively for the stoneware bodies.

Fig 3:13

Two-toned ornamental ware in the popular combination of celadon and cream, designed c. 1937 -8

Two-toned (slip) ware

Murray's close collaboration with the highly talented Norman Wilson resulted in the commercial range of two-tone wares launched in 1937.[139] The two-tone effect was achieved by coating a light coloured body with a darker coloured liquid slip. These two-tone wares came in two colour-ways, celadon green slip on a cream-coloured body and grey slip on an ivory body. These particular two-tone combinations seem to have been reserved exclusively for Keith Murray's designs. The first recorded examples of the new range were adapted from Murray's earlier shapes, but given new expression by the effects of the contrasting slips.[140] He created interesting effects by turning some designs on the lathe to expose bands of the light coloured body beneath. Murray followed these up with several new shapes in Modernist versions of neo-classical designs

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[139] The first design for Two-tone wares or 'Slip ware' as they were called in the Wedgwood catalogue (also called 'Mixed Coloured Body') appeared in *Shape Book no. 5* in December 1936. The next entries are on a page dated Jan 1937: (Shape nos. 4194 – 4200) and were all KM designs (mainly vases and bowls) in mixed colour bodies. (Wedgwood Museum)

[140] The first design was for a Keith Murray beer mug and jug (3810 and 3822) designed originally in c.1933. These reappeared in 1936 as shape nos. 4192 and 4193 designated as 'MIXED COLOURED BODIES' [sic], in *Shape Book No. 5*. (Wedgwood Museum).

(see Fig.3:13 for examples), and more surprisingly, bowls inspired by Korean celadon wares to create a distinctive range that also embraced Modernist versions of traditional shapes.[141] That variety, as also manifested in his decorative designs for Stevens & Williams, shows that his concept of 'Modern' design became more expansive as he encountered more manufacturing methods and materials.

Tableware

Despite his preference for designing form, Murray was asked by Josiah Wedgwood V to make some simple patterns for tableware for the home market, which the latter perceived as having 'some taste but little money.'[142] It was in that particular and very frank correspondence that Wedgwood's financial position and its design policy was made explicit. Josiah V stated that the firm was still not making a profit and stressed the urgency to get cheap (his own words) and modern table services out to meet the needs of a younger but a growing market. He envisaged a simple shape that could be decorated with a number of suitable patterns that could include hand painting, engraving or lithography. The set was not to be a full table service but a basic range consisting of '...plates, vegetable dish, tea cup and saucer, jug and tea and coffee pot.' These were to be produced in bulk and Murray was invited to make a study of moulding and casting techniques at the works in order to prepare for that task.

The factory modelling book indicates that Murray designed a few items of tableware to be produced by slip casting which, from the written comments, seem to have been designed along simpler lines but there is no evidence of

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[141] The range included: big, two handled urn shaped vases in two sizes (shapes 4248 and 4225); three small handled classical bowls on pedestal foot (shapes 4226 / 7/ 4254) and a larger version (shape 4251); and a large snake-handled vase (shape 4250). All of these were designed and produced prior to Oct 1939. (Wedgwood Museum).

[142] Correspondence from Josiah Wedgwood V to Keith Murray, 10th Aug. 1933. (Wedgwood Museum.)

Murray designing a singular tableware shape before the War.[143] It seems that Murray's chief response to the directive was to come up with simple modern patterns for earthenware tableware including 'Pimpernel', 'Iris' and 'Green Tree'. All of those three patterns combined engraved printing for certain parts (especially outlines of motifs and bands) and hand painting for coloured infills and certain details.[144] (See Fig 3:14).

PLATE 510. Bone china part teaset showing *Lotus* pattern designed by Keith Murray *c.* 1934.

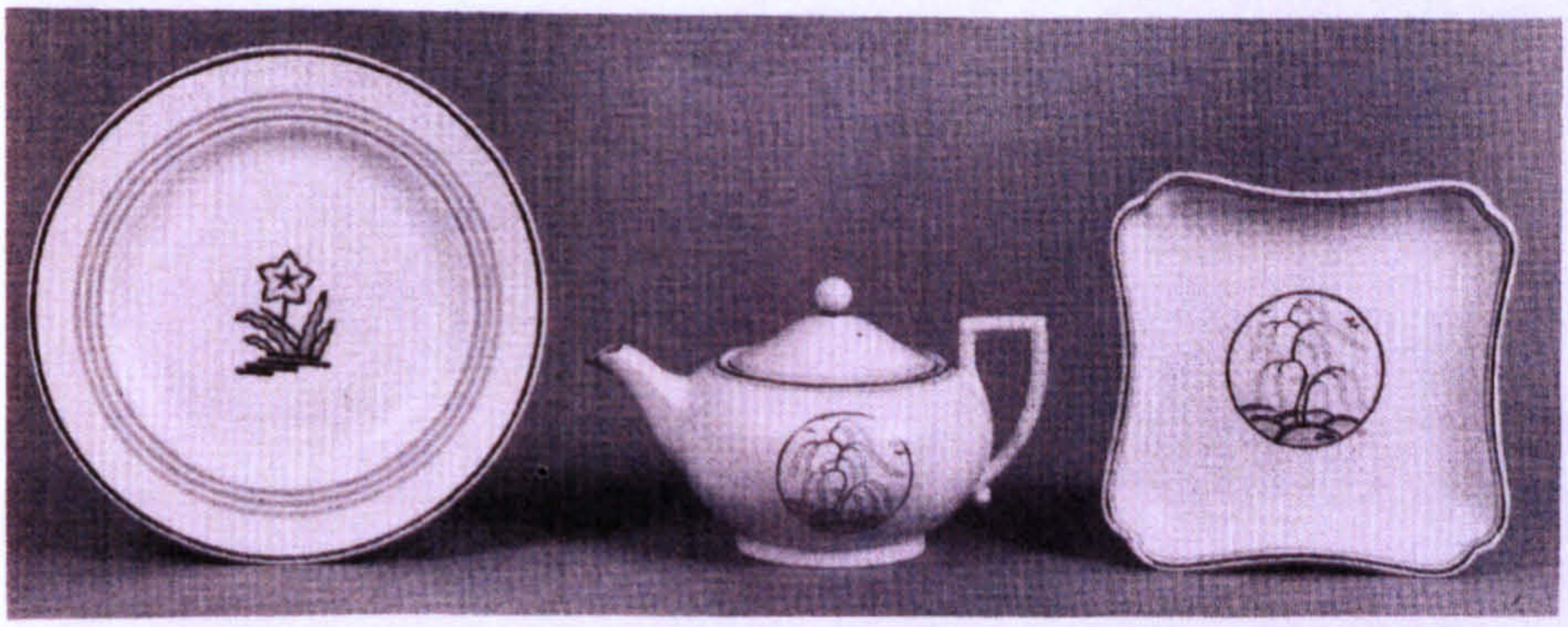

PLATE 511. Moonstone tablewares showing *Iris* and *Green-Tree*

Fig 3:14

Book plates showing three patterns for tableware designed by Murray c. 1934 - 1936: 'Lotus' (on a bone china tea-service); 'Iris' and 'Green Tree' both on Moonstone (matt white) glazed earthenware.

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[143] The firm's *Modelling Book* (dating from October 1927) contains hand drawn and hand written entries, each dated and pertaining to new or amended items for which a mould needed to be made by the factory modellers. Entries for April and May 1934 refer to a new 'bow-shaped' vegetable dish, sauce tureen and soup cup with plain handles. (Wedgwood Museum)

[144] The firm's *Engraving Book* (dating from 12th October 1927), contains dated and hand written entries, pertaining to motifs and backstamps for which engraving was required. Entries between 27th March 1934 and 28th September 1934 detail the initiation of estimates for engraving of certain details for Murray's 'Pimpernel', 'Iris' and 'Green Tree' patterns (and subsequent amendments to the engraving detail). (Wedgwood Museum)

Fig 3:15

Green Tree pattern designed by Keith Murray c. 1933. Hand painted band and central motif

The pattern books show that the Murray patterns were for the most part applied to existing shapes. In all probability the urgency and need for economy implied in Josiah V's letter would have ruled out the cost and time required to model and cost new shapes for bulk production.[145] In all Murray made very few pattern designs and after 1933-4 he was only involved in one table service shape; the Commonwealth service designed in 1947.[146] However, Murray was only one of several freelance designers or artists employed by Wedgwood in the 1930s, a trend that continued under Skellern's artistic leadership into the

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[145] Correspondence from Josiah Wedgwood V, 1933 op.cit. The financial situation at Wedgwood was so dire that in the same letter Murray was asked to do any extra design work on account and set against the next year's retainer fee.

[146] This final project is analysed in Chapter Five (see Case Study II).

1950s.[147] From the mid-1930s Wedgwood designers including Skellern, Millicent Taplin and Star Wedgwood and freelance artists including Eric Ravilious, Rex Whistler and Laura Knight were originating Modernist approaches to decorative designs for ceramics leaving Murray free to specialise in modern shapes. In that context, the few designs Murray made for surface pattern for Wedgwood are in marked contrast to the many designs he made for decorated glass at Stevens & Williams, where he was solely responsible for the firm's 'modern' designs.

Commemorative items.

Murray's simple, elegant shapes with their large expanse of undecorated surface proved particularly suited to commemorative wares. Thus, there are several examples of his designs including a cigarette boxes, a large platter, a bowl, a three pint jug and at least two beer mug shapes that were used for the two coronations of 1937, (although it is unlikely that the decorative work was designed by Murray).[148] One example was a decorated version of Murray's famous beer mug that commemorated the first firing at the new Barlaston plant in 1940. (See fig 3:16)

Although it was a collaborative effort designed by the Wedgwood studio, the decorated version of the mug was successful from an aesthetic viewpoint and also appropriate in terms of acknowledging Murray's contribution to the modernisation of Wedgwood. The printed motif was drawn by Wedgwood's Art Director, Victor Skellern. It showed a view of the new factory in its rural setting probably inspired by Keith Murray's architectural line drawings of the factory and site, c.1936.

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[147] See Batkin, Ch. X11 'Victor Skellern and the Development of Freelance Design During the 1930s', op. cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp. 166 – 187.

[148] See Batkin, Ch. XV, 'Commemorative and Advertising Ware', op. cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* pp 212 – 223.

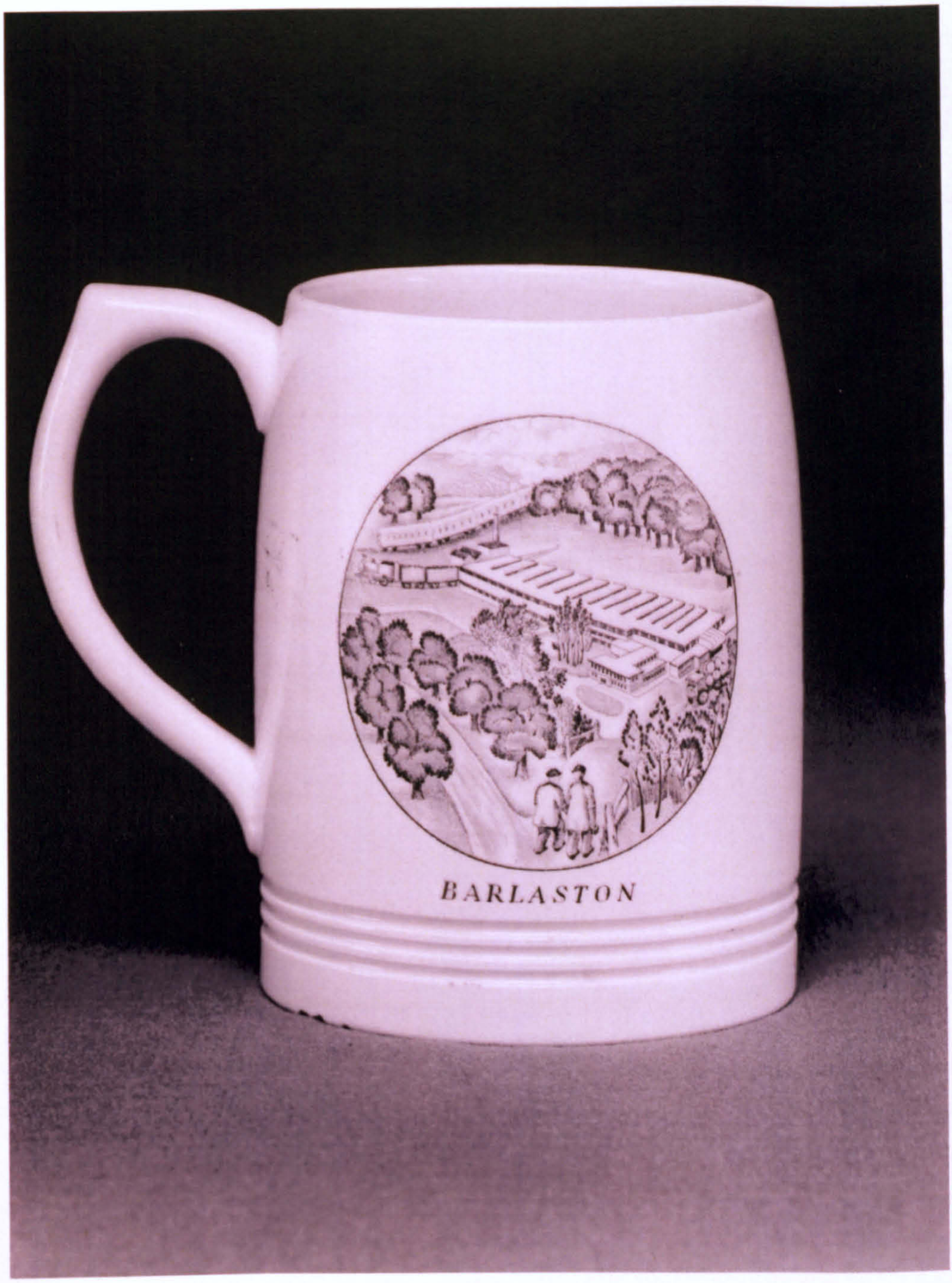

Fig 3:16

Beer Mug with Moonstone glaze designed by Keith Murray, c. 1933. this version made to commemorate the first firing at Wedgwood's new Barlaston factory in 1940. The view of the factory, printed in sepia, was drawn by the firm's Art Director, Victor Skellern

War-time designs and post-war production of the Keith Murray range.

The official opening of the new factory in 1940 marked the end of Murray's most prolific period as a designer for industry in several ways. The imposition of war-time restrictions meant that there was little need for design consultancy at Wedgwood (and Murray's war-time re-enlistment in the RAF left him little time for architectural or design work). There are records of a few experimental pieces in green-glazed earthenware for which Murray revived the old engine–turned method of incised decoration called sprigging, as in these two examples from the firm's war-time shape book. (See Fig. 3:17)

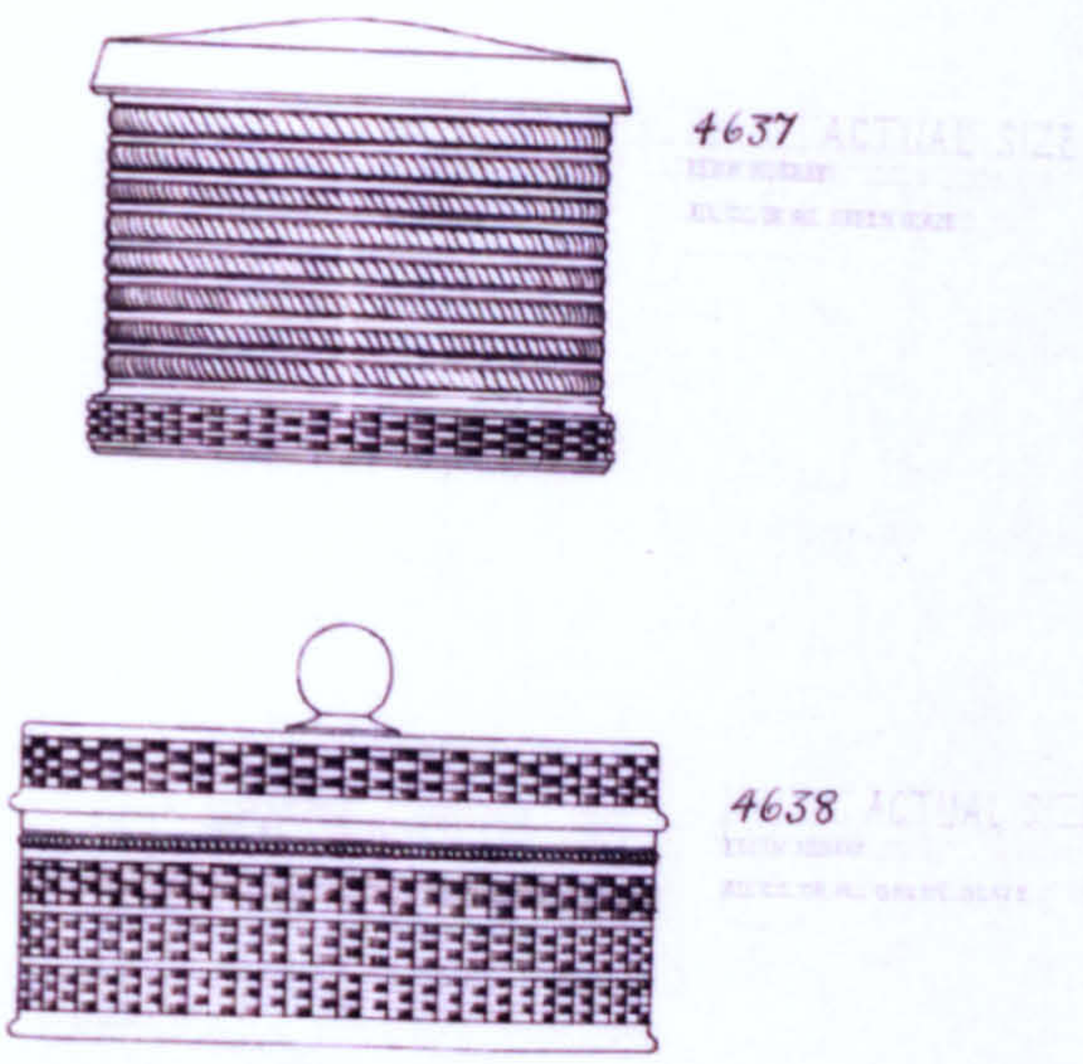

Fig 3:17

Two Keith Murray designs in Shape Book No.5, c. 1940
These covered boxes were made in green-glazed earthenware and have interesting surface patterns which were turned on an original 18th century engine-turned lathe. Shape 4637 has a pattern of 'runner beads' on the box and 'sprigging' (both 18th century patterns) on the base. Shape 4638 has a 'sprigged' pattern on the box and lid.

After the war Murray's architectural practice took up his time and interests including the second phase of the Barlaston site. Murray's first post-war architectural project was the designing of the bone china factory which was completed in 1949. After that time, Murray made no new designs for ceramics but a sizeable part of the pre-war Keith Murray range was still manufactured and marketed at the firm into the 1950s. The post-war range, as detailed in the firm's catalogue for 1940 – 1950, indicates some rationalisation, for example the dropping of Bronze Basalt and Red Stoneware and the limitation of matt glaze colours to Moonstone, Matt Straw and Matt Green.[149]

It is likely that Murray's simple, undecorated designs went back into production immediately after the war because they conformed to ongoing restrictions for goods for the home market. Production methods and production facilities changed as Wedgwood's new plant became fully operational and many of his designs were adapted to take advantage of updated methods and machinery (especially slip-casting and semi-automatic jolleying).[150] Those adaptions became increasingly necessary because the number of potters capable of throwing pots on the wheel was substantially reduced. As we have seen, although some of Murray's shapes could be successfully adapted to less hand-intensive forming methods, the severe profiles and incised bands which he favoured still had to be finished on the lathe by a skilled craftsman who judged the turning by eye.[151] Thus, although Murray's designs may have been suited to Wedgwood's methods in the immediate post-war period, in the longer term they were not and consequently they were phased out in the early 1950s.

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[149] See *Catalogue of Bodies, Glazes and Shapes Current for 1940 – 1950,* Josiah Wedgwood and Sons (Wedgwood Museum)

[150] This was explained to me by Harry Walker. See op.cit Appendix VIII

[151] The combination of mass production methods used to make the forms and hand methods used to finish the pieces resulted in a high number of seconds at the finishing stage. A large proportion of Murray's designs were still made by hand throwing and turning which was not compatible with the shift towards streamlined mass production at the new plant.

A memo, dated 1944 in the firm's archive gives some indication of the importance of Murray's designs for the firm in the 1930s. Looking back to the last year for which there were sales figures for the home market the memo states;

> 'No figures of pattern sales for other markets have been taken out by us since the end of 1940 owing to War conditions and shortage of staff. In the year 1940 the best selling earthenware decoration was 'Willow' pattern – £3,360; this tied in with the Keith Murray range of almost the same value in the home market... The picture for the home market in 1939 is approximately the same'.[152]

From that it can be deduced that the Keith Murray range was a financial success for the firm in the difficult years of the 1930s, especially in terms of providing a new category of relatively inexpensive modern accessories for the home that were attractive to the home market.

On other terms the firm's faith in Modernist design was not successful as this extract from a letter written by Josiah Wedgwood V in 1940 indicates:

> ''...although we do a very large trade in the United States, hitherto they have shown little interest and often a positive aversion to modern Wedgwood. At first I thought that that this might be due to the conservatism of our travellers there, but since, within the last two years, both our chief designer Skellern and Keith Murray have been over there, I have gained a strong impression that modern design in Wedgwood is really not wanted in the United States. They get there modern designs from their domestic manufacturers... but in their minds a large part of the value of Wedgwood lies in its traditional classical English appeal, and they do not seem to notice that the modern Wedgwood, as typified ... in Keith Murray's designs is an evolution of our best traditions.'[153]

Wedgwood ruefully notes that Murray's designs were poor sellers in America (and that Eric Ravilious's patterns were positively disliked).

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[152] Analysis of stock sales memo, 25th Feb. 1944, from Box – 1945 -13 KLW (Wedgwood Museum)

Conclusion

As Chapter Two has shown there were similarities between the two manufacturing industries for which Murray produced most of his designs.[154] A shared legacy in terms of that industrial heritage can be seen in the concentration of manufacturing and decorating skills unique to the individual media of those areas, for example glass blowing and cutting techniques in the Black Country and wheel throwing and hand painting in the Potteries.[155] By the late nineteenth century both areas had established reputations at home and abroad for quality products. Indeed, there was a prestige attached to the manufactures of groups of well-known and long established factories especially those such as Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams who were perceived as aesthetic innovators as well as quality manufacturers. Both were long-standing family businesses and the high quality of their domestic manufactures and their similar genealogies locate them within the decorative arts tradition in Britain.[156]

By the twentieth century the progressive ethos that had originally motivated entrepreneurial manufacturers and effected the transformation of those industry sectors had become reified into a cultural heritage of 'tradition' in Britain. Both firms continued to cultivate their individual artistic and historical heritages throughout the twentieth century.[157] Thus when Murray came to work for the two firms in the early 1930s the long standing and enduring reputations for

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[153] Letter from Josiah Wedgwood V to Professor P. H. Jowett at the Royal College of Art, dated 26th January, 1940. Box No. 1940.18 (Wedgwood Museum).

[154] The most significant of these is that both had a centralised locus in areas which had been transformed by the development of heavy industries, especially coal mining and other mineral extraction and metal working in the first phases of the Industrial Revolution.

[155] The later but parallel development of light manufacturing in those areas can be partially explained on account of the availability of fossil fuel, the emergent transportation networks and the availability of a centralised workforce who were predisposed to industrial employment.

[156] Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd was founded in 1759 by the first Josiah Wedgwood (1730 - 1790) and the Stevens & Williams firm dated back to 1819.

[157] An index of the cultivation of the firms' heritage status in the decorative arts is that during the second half of the twentieth century both firms maintained small museums containing objects and archive material on the premises.

excellence and a self-conscious historical awareness of the highly specialised expertise embedded in those localised industries had combined to foster well-defined attitudes to 'tradition' at both firms. However, there were substantive differences in the ways that both firms responded to and even exploited those legacies. As previously explained Stevens & Williams changed the firm's name to Royal Brierley Crystal in 1931. That alignment to royal patronage is indicative of the firm's more conservative interpretation of its Decorative Arts heritage. A comparison should be made with Wedgwood's adoption of the slogan 'Wedgwood, A Living Tradition', in the 1930s which signalled a more progressive consciousness in relation to its past.

The differences in attitudes indicated by that comparison relate both to the two firms and to the industries they represented. Thus, on the one hand this chapter and the one preceding it identified a set of general factors relating to the similar natures of the two industry sectors associated with the decorative arts and of the two long-established British manufacturing firms with progressive ideas during the inter-war period. A reductive narrative of Murray's experience as designer for both firms might emphasise the negative aspects of Murray's relationship with Stevens & Williams (glass) and the positive aspects of that with Wedgwood (ceramics). However such an analysis ignores the complex of differences and similarities encountered by Murray as he engaged in design work for two different firms in two different industries as established in these two chapters. This thesis aims for a more complex and rigorous appraisal and analysis in order to better understand how and why Modernism as a set of ideas and a set of design practices was problematic in the specific contexts in which Murray operated. Chapter Four of this thesis looks specifically at the role of the designer in industry and includes a range of contemporary perceptions about that role (including Murray's reflections on his own experience in the field).

Chapter Four

Interpreting Industrial Design and the Designer's Role in the Context of Traditional Art Industries

Introduction

The preceding two chapters in which the details of Murray's working relationship with the two principal firms for whom he worked as a designer, show how Murray developed and adapted his design methodology to suit both the different media and the particular production facilities at Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams. This chapter examines the emergent role of the industrial designer in the context of traditional art industries. Part One analyses Murray's own writings about the role of the designer in industry, which showed that he supported the philosophy and ideals of the Modern Movement in architecture and design. Part Two looks at how the industrial design concept was disseminated in progressive sectors of the contemporary design press, and especially through discourse relating to didactic design exhibitions that featured Murray's work. It considers how the particular presentation of Murray as 'designer for industry' was shaped by and in turn supported the Modernist ideal of the singular heroic or 'pioneer' designer. Part Three examines the presentation of new 'designer-ranges' in promotional discourse such as brochures and display advertisements that promulgated the 'designer' concept to retailers, buyers and the consuming public.

Part One: Murray's Writings About Industrial Design

Murray's published writings of that period, scant as they are, indicate that he reflected upon the emergent role of the designer for industry.[1] At times the uncompromising tone of his writings suggest that he saw himself as part of a pioneering cohort charged with changing attitudes towards this new role within industry. Aside from Murray's ruminations on the new challenges to designers his writing on designing for industry suggests that he had at least two agendas. One was to proselytise a Modern Movement vision of mass production by machine:

> 'New times bring new methods. … For Modern mass production the demands are uniformity and cheapness, and it is the function of the machine to give these results, and our job to improve the design of machine-made objects.'[2]

The discussion in earlier chapters about Murray's experience of working at the two firms and the range of production processes and facilities that he encountered revealed that Murray did not design for mass production techniques at either firm before the Second World War. However, his experience of designing for Wedgwood, a firm that was prepared to undertake radical modernisation, enabled him to play a key part in facilitating changes in that direction by drawing on his architectural skills to design the layout and details of the new factory. His understanding of the various stages of production was by then underpinned by his detailed knowledge of the various production stages that he had acquired whilst working as a freelance designer. At issue in Murray's writing is a certain inconsistency in the sense in which he discusses mass production methods, especially in relation to glass making. Murray was not alone in that respect as the discussion below about mould-blown glass will show. The degree of obfuscation in the discourse around mechanised production reveals the problems that opened up for designers and critics as they attempted to impose a Modernist critical framework within traditional industries.

Another agenda was to advance architectural training as the most appropriate for that new role of designing for modern industrial production. Although he acknowledged the possibility of alternatives namely '…one of the good Schools of Art and Crafts such as the Central School in London…' his assertion that '…of all systems of training, the one which best

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[1] I am referring to four published articles dating between June 1933 and February 1936 all of which are cited and referenced in this chapter.

[2] Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer', *Journal of the Society of Glass Technology*, 1935, Vol. 19, pp. 10 – 17.

satisfies these needs is the training for architecture…' demonstrates his conviction on that point.[3] That was founded on his belief that industrial design and architecture were complementary practices because they were both underpinned by technical understanding relating to production. His opening statement in a short article aimed at architectural students made that clear:

> 'The position of the Architect in relation to Designing for Industrial Production is being discussed as though his present activity is a new development. The fact is that in every branch of his day's work he is, and always has been (or should be) an Industrial Designer.'[4]

The commonalty of both fields, Murray argued, was that the initial drawing which constituted a design had then to be realised by technical and material means:

> 'The architect's paper designs are only the beginning of his work… he is primarily a Designer – an industrial designer, since he should have a sufficient working knowledge of every technical process that enters into the production of his building.'[5]

Murray wrote that last statement when he was at the very height of his career as a designer at a time when he began to receive public accolades for his designs in three media for three respected British manufacturers. The first article he wrote about design, (the second in a series entitled 'The Designer and his Problem'), set out how he had come to work in the glass industry and explained how he adapted his architectural design methodology to his work in a glass factory.[6] That article on the design of table glass showed how he worked by drafting fairly accurate profile details on paper, with no evidence of a first stage of loose conceptual sketches. (See Fig. 4:1)

Murray's comments set alongside visual examples explained how some of his first designs made on the drawing board prior to him having an understanding of how glass was formed in the factory setting could not be made exactly without modifications to the form. The discrepancy between drawing and finished article was demonstrated in an illustration of a somewhat geometrical fluted vase that became more curvaceous in its realised form as a result of free hand blowing (See Fig 4:2). A further illustrative example showed that the

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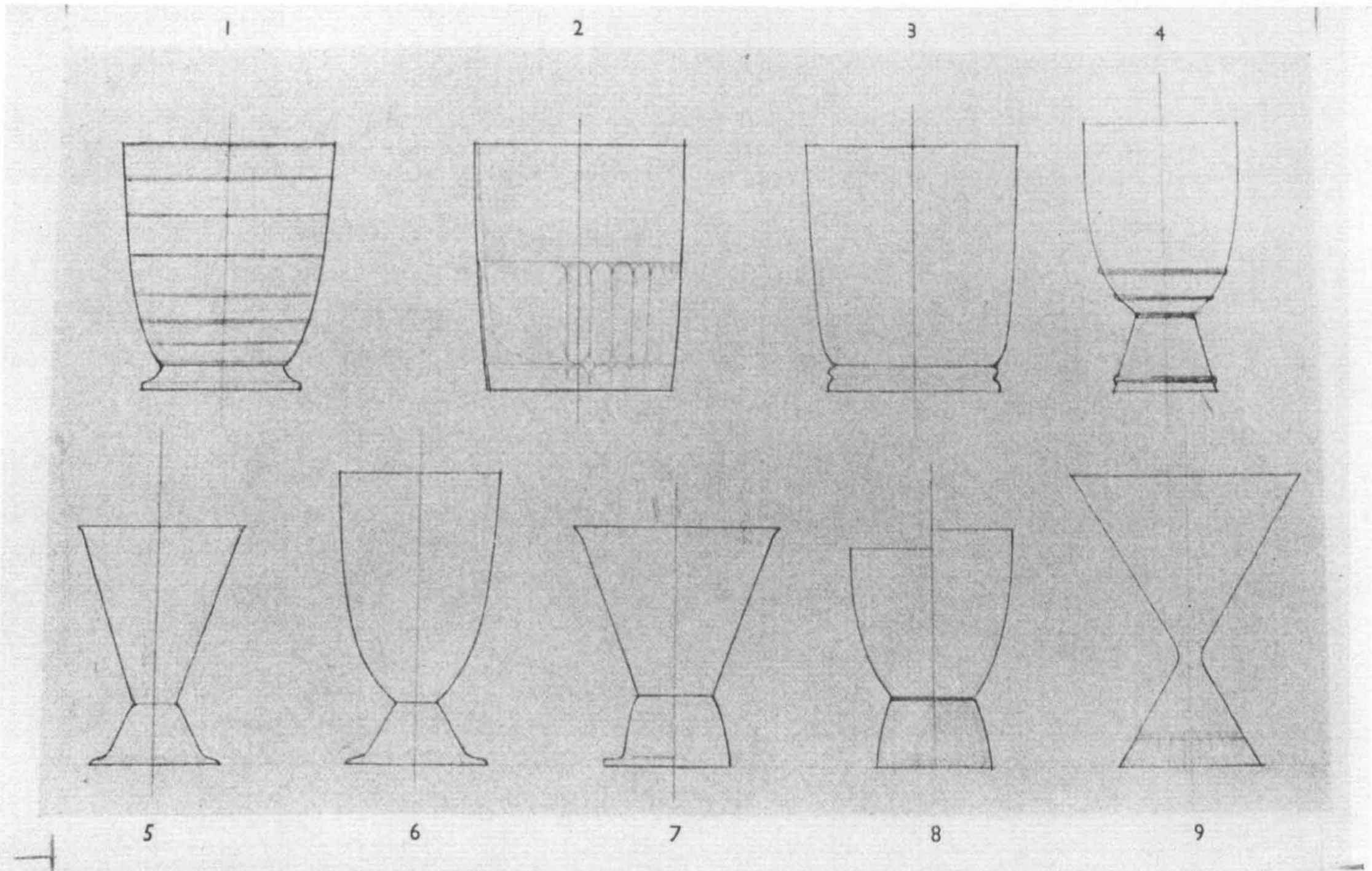
[3] Keith Murray, 'The Designer in Industry: What is the Prospect?', *Journal of Careers*, Jan 1935, pp 22 – 24

[4] Keith Murray, 'The Architect and Industry', *Journal of the University of Durham School of Architecture*, Feb 1936, pp 20 – 21

[5] Ibid, p.20.

designer was soon able to design shapes that could be accurately produced at the works once he was familiar with characteristics relating to material and production methods.[7]



The first sketch for glass designs, made largely as a study for profiles, and without particular knowledge of manufacturing processes. If design No. 6 is compared with the finished product (in the lower photograph on page 55) it will be observed that in the actual making a more flowing shape developed in the foot.

Fig. 4: 1

Murray's first known drawings for glass design c. 1931 but published in Design For Today, June 1933

Murray's commentary on what was sub-titled in the article 'Elements of Glass Design' (as distinct from his discussion of glass making processes) shows how a formalist conception of

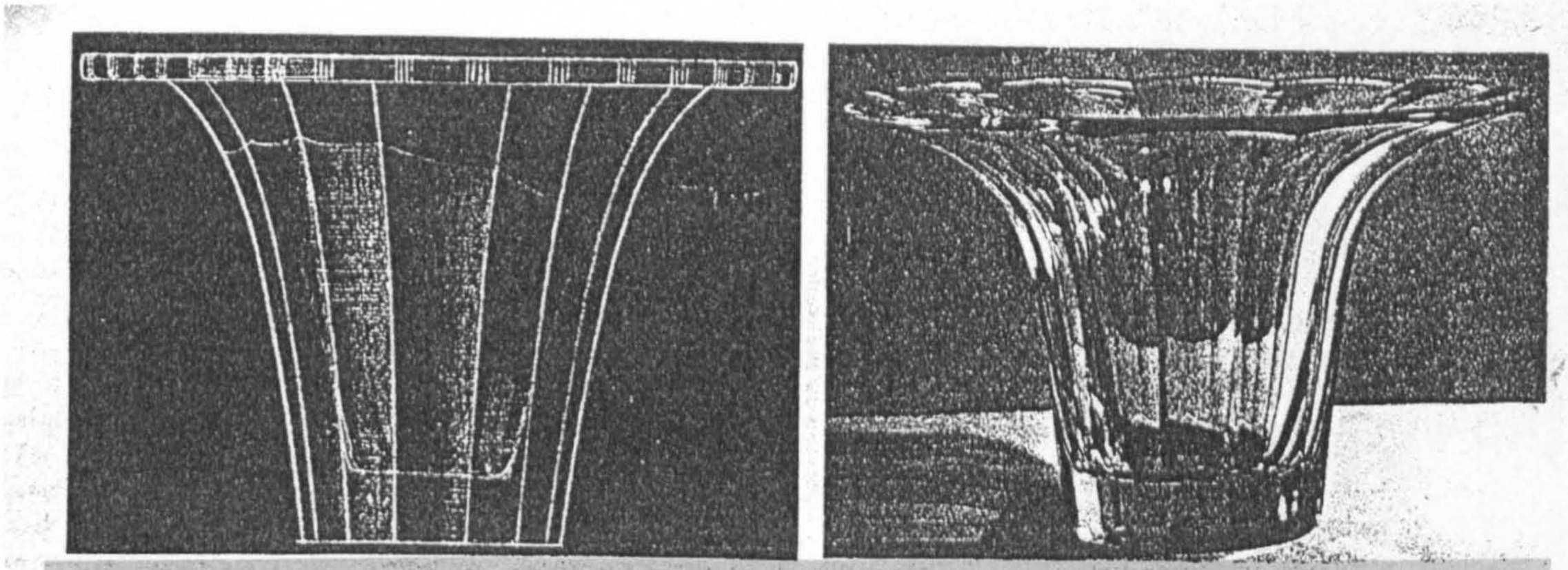
[6] Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', *Design for Today,* June 1933, pp 53 – 65.

[7] It is important, in the context of my later discussion on blowing in moulds - a method preferred by Murray, to note that free–blowing (that is the creation of forms by a master glass blower or "Gaffer") was the principal method of making high quality glass at the factory. With regard to new shapes, these were often made in the first instance by hand (or free-blown) to obviate the costs of having moulds made until they had been tried on the market. So although it was an expensive method and it required the most highly skilled artisans, free-blowing was an economic method for prototyping new designs.

design eclipsed any other consideration.[8] He set out four essential 'elements' for glass design, the first three of which referred directly to formal concerns as set out below:

1. 'The established purpose of a piece must be satisfied by its form.
2. The form is all-important: the profile, the mass, the weight, the colour
3. Decoration, if used at all, must be organised to express the form of the object, not destroy it.' [9]

This set of principles unifies Murray's work in all three media as will be seen in the detailed case studies of his designs in Chapter Five.



The drawing was made before the designer was familiar with the process, and if one compares it with the finished product, it will be noticed that there is considerable discrepancy between the profiles. This is because it is impossible to force glass into square shapes and the natural tendency is for it to flow into simple curves. This vase is made by hand and then fluted by cutting. No mould has been used.

Fig 4: 2

A drawing of a vase designed by Murray c. 1932 alongside the realised version which Murray pointed out was more curvaceous as a result of blowing by hand. (From the same article as Fig. 4:1)

The commentary that accompanied the illustrations also conveys a sub-text in that it frequently, if at times obliquely, alludes to mould-blowing processes (or the lack of them)

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[8] I am referring here to the thematic sections of Murray's article on designing glass which were subtitled in the following order: 'Beginnings' (how he became interested in glass design and inspired by modern European and Scandinavian examples); 'The Processes' (an explanation of the main methods of making and decorating lead crystal glass he encountered at Stevens & Williams); and finally 'Elements of Glass design' as discussed in the current paragraph.

[9] The fourth point was a plea for flat cutting on glass, informed by an adherence to Arts and Crafts principals relating to truth to materials on the basis that flat cutting preserved the clarity of the glass. (That was an oblique attack on diamond cutting, which he articulated more explicitly in a later article). Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', Op cit. p 54

although all of the examples appear to have been made by traditional hand or free-blowing methods. Details in the captions such as '...the vase is made by hand and then fluted by cutting. No mould has been used...'[10] and '...the simple shapes are a natural expression of hand-made glass, and they are comparatively cheap...' [11] provide a context for understanding Murray's caption for a further illustration in the article featuring a set of three sherry decanters and glasses:

> 'Although these particular decanters were made by hand they were designed for blowing in moulds, and therefore for mass-production methods and prices. The stoppers are hand-made and the glasses partly moulded and partly hand-made. Again the price is reasonable.' [12]

In the article Murray had stated that press-moulding techniques were not used at Stevens & Williams and had listed and described the principal forming methods used at the firm (free blowing and mould-blowing) and also listed and described the principal decorating methods (wheel cutting and engraving).[13] Hence it was clear to the reader that the firm was a traditional producer of hand-made 'flint' or lead crystal glass. Murray's comments about lower or reasonably priced goods and the inference that he was designing prototypes for eventual production by moulding methods would surely have struck a note with the readership of *Design for Today* (the magazine-style journal of the DIA).

The designer's 'problem' alluded to in the series' title was that of designing glass which could compete in terms of style and price with Swedish and Continental versions in a scenario that typified manufacturing in Britain in the inter-war period. The reader is left with the impression that by 1933 Murray had evolved a progressive approach which initially involved learning about production methods from production staff and modifying his designs to match those methods and materials. He was also inscribing a further stage to that relationship when the designer, having gained credibility with craftsmen at the firm would be supported by them in his efforts to introduce non-traditional designs and more modern methods. In the 1933 article it is apparent that the modern method that Murray was pursuing

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[10] Ibid. p. 55

[11] Ibid. p 56

[12] Ibid. p 56

[13] Press moulding by machine was the most widely available factory method of forming glass vessels (as opposed to sheet glass which was made by the float process). Mechanised press moulding allowed for the form and decoration to be produced in one operation therefore it was not generally used in conjunction with hand

was mould-blowing, which although he referred to it as '…suited to mass-production methods and prices' was not a machine method. As Murray indicated, mould-blowing was a method in use at Stevens & Williams although his captions imply that he may have encountered some resistance to designing for larger scale production. The reason for that may well have been the costs relating to designing and making new hinged metal moulds and the subsequent risk of a stockpile of identical goods in advance of testing them on the market.[14]

The linking of mould-blowing and mass production methods in that way by Murray over-simplified a more complex set of relations between the two, especially in the context of traditional manufacture. Mould-blowing was part of the repertoire of techniques used in the traditional manufacturing of glass by hand methods. Stevens & Williams, in common with similar British firms had a range of hinged moulds at the glassmakers' disposal, which were not generally used to deliver economies of scale. These moulds tended to be used in the traditional glass house to enable, for example, the forming of straight-sided vessels or the imprint of an 'optic' pattern in the piece; that is mould-blowing was used in combination with hand methods.[15] It was only when manufacture was organised around bulk production of items in combination with other labour saving techniques, such as cutting off rather than folding rims, that mould-blowing glass approached the status of a mass production method. It is not clear whether Murray ever grasped that distinction and in that he was not alone.

Pevsner claimed that the Swedish method of blowing into wooden moulds enabled cheaper production (than in the equivalent British factory), especially when the resulting form was left undecorated.[16] It is by no means certain that Pevsner was correct or accurate in his assertion that wooden moulds were widely used in the Swedish glass industry. In his later article on designing for the glass industry Murray enlarged on the need to adopt modern mechanised mass production methods.[17] However, when he expanded on such methods the example of mould-blowing at Orrefors was cited by him as fundamental to modern design:

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decorating methods. See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion of methods in various sectors of the glass industry.

[14] That would concur with the account of Reginald Williams Thomas who told me that designs were sampled at the British Industries Fair and, if the trade showed a positive response, they would be made up in batches usually of a dozen. That method of design prototyping did not allow for the economics of mould making.

[15] Note that Murray's caption for the sherry decanters and glasses had explained that the glasses were '…partly moulded and partly hand-made.' Ibid.

[16] Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England,* Cambridge, 1937, p 87.

[17] Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer', Op.cit pp 16 – 17

> 'A study of much of the Continental glass of to-day (sic) shows that the use of moulds in various ways has become general, with results that are fresh and interesting. The latest Orrefors productions, for example, seem almost all, whether light or heavy, to have been blown in moulds, giving uniformity of shape and regularity of surface. The metal is clear and the surfaces are not marked, the piece is flatted on the top edge and that flat is made a feature of the design; in other words the process has influenced the design.'[18]

Unlike Pevsner, Murray did not believe that the Swedes had any particular advance over British glassmakers in terms of basic methods of glass manufacture and it is evident from the following quotation that his views were shared by at least one important authority on world glass making:

> 'Another result of the use of moulds is seen in the price at which the glass can be sold. I have heard Professor Turner say in a lecture at Stourbridge, that their (Orrefors) labour costs are high, they have to import their materials as we do, and also that their results could only be explained by greater efficiency in production.'[19]

However, Murray was not explicit about how British manufacturers could be helped to compete with Swedish glass although his plea to glass technologists to '...find some less expensive substitute for cast iron moulds...' indicated that his call for designers to '...design for the machine...' was largely rhetorical.[20] Further analysis of this important paper read to representatives of the glass industry and published in an industry journal with an international readership reveals other themes which evaluate the designer's role in more pragmatic terms.[21]

In it Murray set out his position as industrial designer working in a freelance or consultant capacity, as opposed to two other categories of glass designers: the independent artist craftsman and the staff designer. He described and elaborated upon the latter's role in some detail and made recommendations for cultivating a good staff designer's talents and skills. His assessment and critique of the staff designer's role was prefaced with an assertion of his belief that the staff designer was the better long-term solution to a manufacturer's design needs. Nonetheless, his suggestions to improve that role could have been easily interpreted as a negative assault on the parochialism of both the typical staff designer and the manufacturer. This is exemplified in Murray's reckoning that an outside designer was usually brought in to

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[18] Ibid. pp 16 – 17

[19] Ibid. pp 16 – 17

[20] Ibid. p 16.

introduce new design perspectives because the staff designer had become 'absorbed in routine and out of touch with outside influences'.[22] Murray weighed up what he saw as a potentially symbiotic relationship between freelance designer and staff designer: the former bringing in new ideas and the latter developing those ideas for production at the factory. That, Murray argued was far from ideal not least because such a situation indicated that the employer was failing in design direction and also in giving autonomy and support to his staff designer.

Although he was talking in generalities, his singular experience in designing for one glass firm meant that his observation could easily be interpreted as a thinly-veiled attack on staff and directors at Stevens & Williams (and by extension, similar family firms in the Stourbridge area). Despite an assertion at the beginning of his paper that '…the industrial designer is responsible to his employer…', other ideas expressed by him shows that he believed that the industrial designer had a higher role than mere commercial expediency and therefore '…must retain his faith with what he believes to be beautiful, which is a duty to himself that no one else can be expected to look after.'[23]

Having staked out a claim for the ultimate autonomy of the designer in his treatise on design, 'Some Views of a Designer' amounted to a damming critique of the industry and its failure to meet the needs of a modern mass public through its dogged retention of outmoded attitudes and production practices. He was especially open in his contempt for the Stourbridge industry's over-reliance on fussy and old-fashioned cutting which he argued, was symptomatic of the conservative mind set of both manufacturer and staff designer. The deterministic relationship between good design and commercial success and its negative counterpart is summarised in his claim:

> 'It is chiefly through the designer that the manufacturer can hope to lead, and so long as he is regarded as a person whose job is to add bits of decoration to the work's productions he can never take his proper place'.[24]

What emerges from this paper is an image of the typical staff designer, replete with industry knowledge but shielded or cut off from outside influence; a designer whose energies were consumed in producing endless variations on existing surface patterns to satisfy trade buyers

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[21] The paper was read at a meeting of the Society of Glass Technology in London on 8th January, 1935 and the transcript was published in its journal (op cit).

[22] Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer', Op.cit p.12

[23] Ibid. p 11

[24] Ibid. p 12

whose main concern was with '… the number of hobnails he can get for five shillings, - with the *amount* of decoration rather than with its good arrangement on the glass.'[25] The prevailing (Modern Movement) influences, according to Murray, were from the Continent. With regard to glass design he set out a pro-Modernist argument which he related to Modern Movement architecture:

> '…In this period of simple forms and surfaces in architecture and decoration there seems to be a place for a new set of forms in glass, and fresh forms can only come from fresh methods of manufacture.'[26]

Murray's inference was that neither staff designers, manufacturers nor trade buyers in the lead crystal industry, were able to grasp principles of design based on his own Modernist criteria, '…pure form and genuine function', caught up as they all were with the conventions of cut lead crystal glass.[27]

Murray had begun to understand the structural problems inherent in the manufacture of lead crystal glassware that combined to sustain outdated and deeply conservative attitudes to design and speaking in his capacity as freelance or consultant designer he set out the pros and cons of that role. On the one hand the outside designer did not have detailed industry knowledge, therefore he must avail himself of opportunities to study techniques in his field of design. On the other hand he had probably worked in other or wider fields and was exposed to contemporary ideas in design. The 'designer's problem' that was explicitly articulated in this paper, was that of challenging what he believed were fetishist obsessions with 'best lead crystal' and with hand craftsmanship.

'Views of a Designer', was both brave and foolhardy. A designer who advocated that an established and respected sector of an industry should change its distinctive material, employ new modern methods and produce goods that had a totally different design ethos was not a good advocate for the role of industrial designer from the industry's perspective. Indeed, it is understood that his paper had an alienating effect on his employer and some of his fellow employees.[28] Nonetheless, Murray's diatribe has an authenticity that many Modernist pronouncements lacked because it had been formulated whist working within a manufacturing industry.

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[25] Ibid. p 15

[26] Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer', Op.cit p 16

[27] Those criteria were cited in the context of Murray's explanation of the merits of '…a good piece of plain glass…', ibid. p 15

He was not however intransigent although he persisted in introducing plainer and even undecorated lines in accordance with his interpretation of Modern Movement trends. His spirit of compromise can be seen in the number of designs he made that included cut and engraved decoration. Underpinning that was his respect and sympathy for skilled craftsmen, especially those in the decorating workshops who, he came to realise, were economically dependent on the designer for their livelihood.[29] The following extract shows that Murray probably found least resistance and most support for his design innovations from that quarter:

> 'Speaking of the craftsmen, my experience has been that they have always given the greatest help and encouragement, - they invariably do their best to satisfy the designer, even though they are offered problems they have not attempted before. They seem to welcome any change from the monotony of their ordinary work, and any new ideas are welcomed with an enthusiasm which has been the greatest encouragement I have met.'[30]

Detailed analysis of these two articles reveals how Murray set out with a vision of how to modernise glass design and within a short time found himself criticising a whole industry sector. In the 1933 article ('The Design of Table Glass') he gave an account of how he modified his original ideas in accordance with with existing production methods and with the limitations of the medium - what he saw as design led by process. Although there is no account relating to his short engagement as a consultant designer for Mappin & Webb, it is likely that Murray approached designing for three firms in three different media in a similar way; that is he had evolved a methodology for designing for industry based upon his architectural training and experience. By 1935 Murray had recognised the shortcomings of process-led design in an industry sector (lead crystal manufacturing) that was highly conservative. His solution was radical: production itself should be changed to accommodate a new design ethos. What is not clear is whether he believed it was the designer's role to undertake and articulate such a critique.

It is noteworthy that Murray's critique of the glass industry became more radical following his immersion with glass design. In the 1933 article, Murray's comments implied a tentative advance towards designing for mass production. By 1935 he publicly dammed the industry for failing to make that possible as though it had been his principal aim. At issue here is a set

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[28] Keith Murray in correspondence between Fiona MacCarthy, op.cit. 1968

[29] During the early 1930s skilled hands were laid off and hardships were exacerbated because the factory was frequently on a two or three day week.

of conflicting ambitions for the designer in industry, for in the same article Murray had articulated key qualities that he associated with this new professional role (a role that was also new to him as a practitioner). Aside from the most obvious skills relating to aesthetics he also outlined pragmatic attributes that seem at odds with the meta–critical scope of his discourse on design. These included an ability to introduce new ideas and also attitudinal qualities such as submission to the employer and developing and maintaining good working relationships with staff designers and craftsmen. Writing in more general terms about the Modernist designer in industry in a paper addressed to prospective designers he set out a simple set of essential attributes that were not industry specific:

> 'He should have a sincere professional aspiration to produce good work, that he should be able to think in terms of form rather than be merely a decorator, and that he should have the capacity to understand all the commercial problems involved.'[31]

The constant allusion to both the designer and the architect as 'he' confirms that Murray's ideal designer was not only an architect-trained but also male, despite the fact that women were beginning to make inroads into both fields. Feminist historians have argued that the privileging of form-giving in the Modernist hierarchical context legitimised an overwhelmingly male dominance of the role of industrial designer.[32] Murray's bias in that respect reflected the general gender bias in design of the period, which largely restricted women designers to decorative work. A significant phrase from the quotation above '…that he should be able to think in terms of form rather than be *merely* a decorator…' (my italics) makes it clear that a formalist agenda was fundamental to Murray's interpretation of industrial design. Underlying that is a derogatory attitude towards decorative design from which Murray clearly believed the Modernist designer should distance himself.
Murray's sexist conceptualisation of the industrial designer is not a major issue for this study but neither should it go unremarked because it brings into question other biases and omissions that shape the narrow (and predominantly formalist) framework in which the role of the designer is discussed by Murray. For example, although he called for industrial designers to improve the design of machine made objects and talked obliquely about mass

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[30] Ibid. p 14

[31] Keith Murray , 'The Designer in Industry: What is the Prospect?, *Journal of Careers,* January 1935, pp 22 – 24.

[32] For example, see Cheryl Buckley, op. cit *Potters & Paintresses;* and Judy Attfield & Pat Kirkham (eds), *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design,* The Women's Press, 1989.

production and cheaper prices he did not make one single pronouncement about the social agenda of the Modern Movement, let alone the role that the designer might play in that programme.

Whilst on the one hand Murray appeared to be claiming the high ground for the industrial designer (and the architect designer) in the same paper he also debunked progressive design and in particular tried to spell out a distinction between his interpretation of Modernist design and modern art versions applied to design:

> 'What is wanted is not Art with a capital A, and not modernist art, but just plain good design: if a design has been given good line and form, and if it satisfies contemporary taste, it will be modern.'[33]

That notion of 'plain, good design' understates what was perhaps the most progressive aspect of Murray's design philosophy. That debunking was further pursued in his advocation that '…fine craftsmanship be reserved for only the finest work', with its implication that modern production should not aim for the ultimate standards associated with the higher realms of the decorative arts. In the same vein his call to the designer to '…design for the machine so that machine-made goods are attractive as well as useful…' conveys a simple formula for Modern Movement design that invoked new and non-elitist technical standards and an understated approach to the styling of machine-made objects. Taken together, these pronouncements do not give the impression that Murray fetishised either form (for form's sake) or the machine. In that respect Murray's design ethos seemed to be essentially low-key and pragmatic. However, Murray did not work in a mechanised industry so given the absence of mass production facilities in the firms for which Murray worked as a designer one might argue that the imperatives about design and manufacture that he articulated in his writing did not refer to present conditions.

Murray's own explanation of what constituted Modern Movement design as quoted above: it should have good line form and satisfy contemporary taste, implied that time was indeed an issue for him, at least in the sense of his designs being manifestly 'of their time'. Murray's simple pronouncement hardly amounts to an obsession with the Modernist notion of zeitgeist, which conceptualised the 'spirit of the age' in terms of machines and machine symbolism although, as we have seen certain aspects of his design philosophy idealised a new mechanised era. Another of his comments about hand crafted glass design shows that whilst

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[33] Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer', Op.cit p 11

he valued traditional designs he was highly aware (and critical of) their anachronistic symbolism:

> '...For example, there are two lovely goblets in the Academy show which I was told were the design of the craftsman who made them, but without any idea of disparagement, I felt that they were the finest Elizabethan glasses I have ever seen. I don't want to take any sides in the old war between the craftsman and the machine, but I don't want to see them confused.'[34]

It is evident that Murray was distancing himself from Arts & Crafts adherents who would have had no problem with the concept of handicraft products made by designer craftsmen that looked like traditional craft archetypes (so long as they were made by hand methods). He was clearly of the view that design for modern production methods did call for a new aesthetic approach. In that respect so did Pevsner who articulated ideas about designs expressing the spirit of the age in a more forthright way than Murray, which implied that he had ingested the concept of zeitgeist. In a reflective commentary on the retention of traditional styles and methods in the British pottery industry Pevsner commended the modern outlook of the Germans who, he argued welcomed innovation.[35] As an example he cited experimental work from the Bauhaus of which he wrote:

> 'The Bauhaus pots and cups may be less perfect than some of Josiah Wedgwood's, but they express one quality which Wedgwood of necessity could not bestow upon his objects – the spirit of the twentieth century'.[36]

Murray could and did bestow the spirit of the 20th century on most of the designs he made for Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams as the case studies in Chapter Five will show. That is, his designs looked distinctly different to other wares made in similar materials and utilising similar methods in spite of the fact that the goods he designed for both firms were largely made in very similar ways to their 18th century antecedents. It is also apparent that Murray realised that because of the time taken in acquiring craft skills the modern industrial designer was in no position to compete with craft-based design and it was thus not appropriate to do

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[34] Ibid. p. 16

[35] It was in that same section of his 1937 survey of industrial arts in England that Pevsner acknowledged the innovative work of Keith Murray for Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams.

[36] Pevsner, *An Enquiry*... Op.cit. pp 82-83

so. Instead he favoured manufacturing methods such as the mould-blowing process because, he argued, '...it is a much simpler problem for the designer to cope with.'[37] That comment is revealing as in 1933, he was advocating modern methods because they were more suited to the skill-set of the Modernist industrial designer not, as in his 1935 paper where he argues for the uptake of this method because it enabled cheaper large scale production.[38]

That first position is the most revealing about Murray's vision of the designer's role as a giver of form because it offered a different interpretation of functionalism, one that was as divorced from the social ethics of the Modern Movement as it was from Arts and Crafts principles. In that particular context, Murray was articulating a functionalist credo that privileged expediency from the industrial designer's point-of-view. The formalist agenda that Murray pursued in the 1930s substantiates Pevsner's post-war reappraisal of the Modern design aesthetic of the 1930s discussed in Chapter One. Speaking about designs of the 1930s Pevsner claimed that the obsession with a rectilinear formalism combined with an antipathy to applied decoration, made it easy '...to define what we meant by modern design.'[39]

To revisit one of Murray's criteria for a designed object, that it should embody '...pure form and genuine function', one might question exactly what he meant by function, either 'genuine' or otherwise. It is unlikely that he was implying a more constructivist conceptualisation relating to the articulation of parts-to-whole or a functionalist concern with economic application of materials and techniques. On the other hand it is not clear if by function he meant utility in use or whether he was drawing on Arts and Crafts ideas about form being the honest expression of materials and techniques in an object's manufacture. His conceptualisation of 'pure form' is less ambivalent because, in the context in which he cited it, he was equating 'good' (glass) design with plainness (i.e. undecorated finish).

It would seem, from Murray's reflections on his experience as a designer for industry that he was drawn to certain production processes because they made it easier for the designer to achieve certain aesthetic effects associated with Modern Movement design. Such a position refutes any suggestion that Murray was concerned with organic principles of form, indeed my study of his designs in three media shows that Murray generally chose to use a range of forming methods that tended towards more restrained and rectilinear profiles. In addition, his

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[37] Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', Op cit. p 54

[38] Keith Murray, 'Some Views of a Designer', Op.cit p 16

[39] Nikolaus Pevsner in Op. cit. Michael Farr', *Survey*, p.314.

comments on the two Tudor-style goblets cited in the discussion above indicate that in his view designing along organic lines was more properly the role of the artist craftsman and not that of the designer for industry who was charged with a different agenda.

By 1935 Murray had come to believe that the role of the Modernist designer was to design for the machine but as we have seen, Murray and other British designers of his generation had little opportunity to fulfil that role. However, as the earlier discussion of Murray's explication of his design methodology has shown, he distinguished technics (i.e. materials and processes) from formal concerns (or 'Elements of Glass Design', as he called the latter) in the design process. There is no parallel set of writings about his role as a designer in the ceramics industry and one might conjecture whether this was because Murray had such a different experience working as a freelance designer for Wedgwood. For one thing, Murray was given a fairly free hand to design form; indeed he did little else at that firm. What was perhaps more heartening to Murray was that Wedgwood's management was grappling with the issue of modernising production methods as discussed in Chapter Three.[40] However, this analysis of his writings and reflections on the new and evolving role of industrial designer demonstrates that his primary concern was with form-giving or styling of factory made goods in keeping with Modern Movement aspirations (for a world transformed by modern technology). Indeed Murray had very little to say about the status of modern products beyond that they should be simpler in design, less expensive and not attempt to emulate fine craftsmanship.

The narrowness of his commentary on the social role of design suggests that his design philosophy was both shaped and contained by the discourse of the design reform movement. Although design reform was essentially progressive in its outlook the stated aim of influential organisations such as the DIA was to make good design more affordable to the population as a whole: that is good design was perceived as a top-down and evolutionary process. In that respect Murray's own discourse reflects the pervasive conservative attitude in Britain, even amongst design reformers, towards design solutions that could be easily understood and engaged with by manufacturers and the buying public.

What is noticeable, given Murray's outspoken criticism of the lead glass industry in which he was employed, is that he did not articulate any sense of frustration that the designer for industry was not able to engage in more radical design solutions for modern life. Murray seems to have accepted the status quo regarding the commercial imperatives of designing for

industry axiomatic to the design reform movement. So although Murray inferred that new methods (especially machine methods) would enable new and more modern approaches to the design of material goods there is no evidence that he ever engaged in a more radical analysis of design or experimented with more socially-oriented design problems.[41]

Murray's scant writing on and about designing for industry demonstrates that the role of industrial designer was problematic for a designer like himself who was concerned with advancing progressive ideas in an industry context. Debates and discussions about the role of the designer in industry or industrial artist or industrial designer featured frequently in contemporary British design discourse and from a number of viewpoints.[42] In the design-oriented press, the general tendency was to set out the case for a more systematic engagement with principles of design especially in the manufacturing industries.[43] In that discursive

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[40] Murray was appointed architect for the factory and offices in 1936, only a year after his public attack on the glass industry.

[41] One indicator of that is his lack of involvement with the most radical and international architectural grouping in Britain, the Modern Architectural Research Society (hereafter MARS). MARS founded in 1933 was the British branch of the Congrés Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (hereafter CIAM). One of its first public activities was the staging in 1934 of a didactic display: *New Homes for All,* at the *Building Trades* exhibition Olympia, London. Leading members in the 1930s were fellow architect designers, Wells Coates and Serge Chermayeff and the critic and curator, Herbert Read. I have cited the latter three because Murray's name was often mentioned alongside Coates and Chermayeff, as representing the leading edge of British industrial design (see the section below for details and references) and Herbert Read singled out Murray's ceramic designs as exemplary work. Thus Murray was known by and associated with people in the MARS group but there is no evidence of his having any formal connection with the organisation and its aims.

[42] I am distinguishing here between the many published articles and papers that discussed design as a concept and especially that commented on design aesthetics as an evaluative index and those which engaged with the role of the designer in industry or manufacture.

[43] Typical of that category were articles in *Design for Today* such as 'The Manufacturer and The Designer' (an address by a Professor Constable presumably to an audience of DIA members). It set out the various positions that the designer could occupy in a manufacturing firm (e.g. staff designer, freelance designer and part-time designer working for more than one firm). He also distinguished between more creatively-oriented staff designers and less original ones whose forte was adapting others' designs to the production facilities of the firm where he was employed. Professor Constable 'The Manufacturer and the Designer', *Design for Today,* May 1936, pp187 -188.
The Studio was more oriented to reporting on trends and tendencies in design especially as seen in exhibitions and new showrooms or, on rare occasions, on the work of individual designers. One article included a more reflective piece by Frank Pick: 'the Artist's Place in Industry', in 1931. It was in the form of a signed letter '...received from Mr Frank Pick in relation to the recent formation of the Society of Industrial Artists in London', *The Studio,* Vol 101, 1931, p 299. In it he used the term 'industrial artists' (not a satisfactory one in his view) to classify '...the decorators, the designers of furniture and equipment and so forth, who bring to completion the plans of the architects themselves.'
In Pick's 1933 address to the denizens of industry he was clearly making a distinction between 'art' and 'design' in the context of industry. His conceptualisation of 'design' was related to both a professional role at the start of the manufacturing process and to a more holistic effort on the part of machine hands and craftsmen to realise the designer's concept in perfect material form from the designer's idea. He warned: 'We may put our designer into a nice studio and he may prepare nice drawings of what he would like to see made , but the drawings have to go to the factory..' Thus design, by Pick's reckoning, was not located outside of the manufacturing process but

context, a picture of the industrial designer never emerges, mainly because the speakers tended to over-generalise in order to engage a non-specialist audience.[44] It is noticeable that in the two industries in which Murray worked as a designer, there was public discussion about the role of the specialist industrial designer. For example, in the Potteries region the North Staffordshire Society of Industrial Artists (SIA) hosted a meeting to which manufacturers were invited to present their views and participate in discussion.[45] One manufacturer (a Mr Colley Shorter) listed a seemingly endless lists of tasks connected to the role, only one of which, '…design shapes, preferably modelling them personally'… involved any creative endeavour. J.W. Wadsworth responding for the SIA was clearly exasperated by such an archaic view of the designer's role and suggested '…what such firms needed was not a designer but a decorating manager.' It was clear from the way that the discussion proceeded that most of the participating manufacturers did not understand the impact of design on their industry; indeed, they seemed to be mystified as to why one design sold well to the public whilst others did not.

Although this study necessarily foregrounds Modernist agendas, especially from the viewpoint of Modernist writers, designers, reformers and propagandists there are other contexts that should not be ignored, especially the commercial and consumer cultures in which the phenomenon of 'designer' goods was beginning to have some currency; hence the second part of this chapter which focuses on the promotion and reception of Murray's designs. In the absence of first person accounts of buying and owning Keith Murray designs, it goes on to interrogate the propositions pertaining to Modernist design and especially to the concept of 'designer' goods advanced in the promotional discourse of trade and display advertisements and sales catalogues. What emerges from this micro study of a single designer is a more complicated set of precepts and agendas pertaining to the industrial design (or the designer in industry) ideal.

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integrated throughout: 'Design is an active process which must conquer all that it covers and weld it into a unity, a purpose and achievement. That is design in industry.' Frank Pick, 'Design in Industry, (Being an Address to the Imperial Industries Club, 1933),' *Design for Today,* Jan 1934, pp. 37 – 39.

[44] My analysis of those articles and other similar ones also leaves me to conclude that the speakers' prime agenda was to explain and advance the idea of design as fundamental to modern industry. I would cite as an exception Pevsner's (op cit) *An Enquiry,* which described the roles and status of designers in the range of manufacturing industries that Pevsner surveyed.

[45] Reported in *PGGTR* and discussion detailed. See 'What the Pottery Manufacturer Expects from the Designer', *PGGTR,* April 1933, pp. 499 -502.

Part Two: Disseminating the Industrial Design Concept

The design exhibition and related discourse

In Chapter One it was argued that with very few exceptions British Modernist designers of the inter-war period did not engage with principles of scientific rationalism. It is particularly evident in factory-made glass and ceramics where there are no equivalents to Swedish and German functionalist products such as the space-saving stacking tableware (Praktika) and oven-to-table earthenware (Pyro), designed by Wilhem Kåge at the Swedish firm, Gustavsberg and the modular glass containers (Kubus) designed for the Lausitzer Glasverein in 1938 by Wilhem Wagenfeld.[46] The most innovative British glass products of the period were ovenproof glass cooking ware ranges (e.g. Pyrex, Phoenix and Orlak), which had a genuinely broad appeal and were reasonably affordable.[47] Design reform journals and design exhibitions frequently featured ovenproof glass ranges because they exemplified the benefits of collaboration between designer and manufacturer to produce inexpensive design solutions for everyday living that would be attractive to all classes of people.[48] However, although a few manufacturers and designers went some way towards a Modernist approach, given that the criteria for good design were inscribed in terms of improving existing standards, there were little or no incentives to initiate or collaborate in more analytically rational design projects.

That reform ethos, which was principally concerned with improving standards of design and improving public taste, determined the criteria for the selection of goods for display in the didactic design exhibitions of the 1930s.[49] Murray's work in glass, ceramics and sometimes

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[46] Illustrated and discussed in John Heskett, *Industrial Design,* Thames & Hudson, 1980, p. 113, plate 87.

[47] Murray was unable to design for that product sector because he was committed to an exclusive contract with Stevens & Williams who did not diversify into machine production.

[48] Harold Stabler (like Murray, a designer in several media including glass, ceramics and metal) designed oven-to-table ranges in heatproof glass for Chance Brothers (Orlak) in 1930 and for James A. Jobling (Streamline) in 1934. The architect Raymond Mc Grath who worked with Wells Coates on the interiors for Broadcasting House designed a range (Phoenix) with Elizabeth Craig for the British Heat Resisting Co. c. 1937. See Frederick Cooke, *Glass,* (Twentieth Century Design Series), Bell & Hyman, 1986, pp 56 –67.

[49] The major design exhibitions in Britain, in terms both of national importance and of a collaborative response to issues raised by design reformists were the *Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Art,* Dorland Hall, London, 1931, (hereafter *1931 Swedish Exhibition,*) *British Industrial Art in Relation to the Home,* Dorland Hall, London,1933 (hereafter the *1933 Dorland Hall* exhibition); the *Exhibition of Contemporary Industrial design in the Home*, Dorland Hall, London, 1934, (hereafter the *1934 Dorland Hall* exhibition); the Royal Society of Arts' *Exhibition of Art & Industry* at Burlington House, London in 1935, (hereafter the *1935 Art & Industry* exhibition). Of these the first was not a British exhibition but its public success, especially in showing contemporary Swedish factory-made glass and ceramics clearly inspired the DIA who played a major part in originating and organising the *1933 Dorland Hall* exhibition at the same venue. The latter was instigated after the *Gorrell Report* of 1932 had made the case for a central (and permanent) exhibition of contemporary British

metal (but occasionally in all three media) was featured in all of the British design exhibitions discussed in this section and in many of the in-store exhibitions and smaller institutional exhibitions discussed throughout this chapter, hence the extensive discussion about the staging and reception of design exhibitions that follows.[50] A major inspiration for staging didactic design exhibitions in the 1930s was the *Stockholm Exhibition of* 1930, (hereafter the *1930 Stockholm Exhibition*) which was extensively reported upon in the British architectural and design press.[51] That exhibition featured separate displays of glass, ceramics, metal ware and textiles by Swedish manufacturers selected on the basis of Modernist design aesthetics and retail price. The settings for display of manufactured goods were simple and in keeping with the exhibition architecture designed by Gunnar Asplund in the International Style. Key criteria for display of domestic objects were that items were grouped together in price categories so that their design and quality could be appreciated in terms of their price range. To drive that point home it was insisted that the retail price should be shown on exhibit labels as well as the manufacturer's name and the designer's name. That mode of display was established in Britain after the smaller but highly successful *1931 Swedish Exhibition* of which DIA stalwart, Noel Carrington later commentated:

> '… (it) had a [sic] effect quite disproportionate to its size. Even the official world awoke. The Gorrell Committee appointed by the Board of Trade … invited the Association (the DIA) to submit its views. The first Dorland Hall Exhibition of Industrial Art was … a direct outcome of the Swedish exhibition and …was largely the work of DIA members. In a sense it implemented in an experimental way the Gorrell recommendations.[52]

That Swedish model of selection and display was followed at the *1933 Dorland Hall* exhibition. Even the catalogue of the more aesthetically-oriented *1935 Art in Industry*

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design and it was this exhibition that became the benchmark against subsequent British design exhibition were judged. The *1934 Dorland Hall,* exhibition was a more commercially-conceived venture and the 1935 Art & Industry exhibition was collaboration between design reformers, especially its organiser, John De La Vallette and the Royal Society of Arts. It was hosted by the Royal Academy of Arts. Most design reformers were put off by the venue itself (a bastion of the highbrow British art scene) and the general conception of the exhibition which combined rather 'arty' set pieces with displays of British manufactured goods.

[50] See my table showing principal exhibitions that featured examples of Keith Murray's designs in glass, ceramics and /or metal contemporary to the period in which his designs were in production (c 1932 – c.1951), Appendix IX.

[51] See for example *DIA Quarterly Journal, No 12,* (subtitled 'The Stockholm Issue), July 1930, which contained four major articles plus its editorial devoted to the exhibition (including a critique by Frank Pick). The *Architectural Review* also devoted an entire issue to reporting on the Stockholm Exhibition. It featured a major review article by P. Morton Shand as well as 10 pages devoted to illustrations of its interior displays of Swedish glass, ceramics, silver and rugs at the exhibition. See P. Morton Shand, 'Stockholm 1930', *Architectural Review, LXVIII,* August 1930, pp 62 -72. See also Author unknown, 'Living Shipshape: the lesson of the Stockholm Exhibition 1930'. *The Studio, C,* 1930, pp 164 – 179.

[52] Noel Carrington, 'History and Progress: II The last Ten Years', *Design for Today,* April 1935, pp 180 -181

exhibition cited designers' and manufacturers' names and the retail price of objects in the catalogue entries.[53] Thus the conceptualisation of didactic display tended to position the consumer as design critic and at the same time inscribe a design ethos that privileged attribution to an individual and named designer, Modernist aesthetics, quality manufacture and value for money.[54]

A characteristic of those exhibitions was that displays of manufactured goods were usually divided by medium (e.g. glass, ceramics, metal, furniture). A general condition of selection for exhibits of industrial manufacture was that they should be selected from existing commercial ranges, thus there was little scope to include experimental work in those sections. Larger displays of a conceptual nature were the focal attraction at the *1933 Dorland Hall* exhibition, most notably a bed-sit flat with its built-in and multi-purpose unit furniture designed by the Modernist architect, Wells Coates.[55] His "Minimal Flat" heralded an entirely new domestic concept, although it was based on a realised architectural project.[56] It was praised in a review by Joseph Peter Thorp who summarised Wells Coates's achievements as:

> '....a brilliant feat of intelligent compression, intelligent because the problem – harmony of wide views and narrow means – has been kept

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[53] The selection criteria for that exhibition did not specifically demand that exhibits be from lines already in production, although that was implied in its call for submissions: '...this exhibition is intended to be one of British wares produced by cooperation between British manufacturers and British artists.' Primary importance was attached to '...decorative value, based on originality of design, attractive finish and suitability of material and method of manufacture.' This call to manufacturers, entitled 'British Art in Industry' was published in the *The Studio CIX,* 1934, p160.

[54] There was also a British precedent for that approach to didactic display in the small exhibition, *Industrial Art for the Slender Purse,* held at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1929 and organised by the British Institute of Industrial Art. Prices of the exhibits (all examples selected by the organisers from manufacturers' existing ranges) were printed in the catalogue and exhibited in a 'shop' style of display. Yasuko Suga writes about the aims and staging of this small but ground breaking exhibition in her article about the British Institute of Industrial Art. See Yasuka Suga, 'Purgatory of Taste or Projector of Industrial Britain? The British Institute of Industrial Art', *Journal of Design History, 16,* No 2 2003, pp 167 – 185

[55] The exhibition also featured a full scale 'Weekend House', a small house in the International Style designed by Serge Chermayeff. The inclusion of architectural set pieces (especially houses) was also a feature of the 1930 Stockholm exhibition. The idea of exhibiting furnished houses to promote awareness of architects' solutions to everyday living was probably inspired by the *Weisenhoff Siedlung*, an exhibition of experimental housing designed by leading European Modernist held in Stuttgart, Germany in 1927. It was staged by the German design reform organisation, the Deutsche Werkbund under the direction of the German Modernist architect, Mies Van Der Rohe.

There was another and more commercial precedent for including furnished houses in public exhibitions in Britain as exemplified in the popular *Ideal Home* Exhibition, sponsored by the *Daily Mail* and held annually at Olympia, London since 1908. The *Ideal Home* displays were of contemporary commercial houses and the purpose was to promote sales. The concept proved to be very popular and it has remained a major feature of the exhibition to date. See Deborah S Ryan, *The Ideal Home Through the Twentieth Century*, London, Hazar, 1997.

[56] The original concept was for the innovatory *Isokon* apartment block designed by Wells Coates for Jack Pritchard (founder of Isokon design) and built at Lawn Road, Hampstead, London in 1934. A prototype version of the furnished interior was displayed to the public at the *1933 Dorland Hall* exhibition.

> consistently in mind, and ideas are carried to a logical conclusion. A highly satisfactory aesthetic effect is the result, not of conscious attention to aesthetic problems but flows from an entirely practical plan for the compact provision of the available modern apparatus for living. …No-one who has seen this will be content with the unhandiness and drab squalor of the usual bed-sitting-room.'[57]

The design and furnishings for the flat were largely produced by Isokon, a design and manufacturing company set up by Jack Pritchard who played a major role in advancing modernist ideas in Britain. The example of the 'Minimal Flat' illustrates not only the important role of didactic design exhibitions in the 1930s in bringing more radical design concepts to the public but also the role of small dedicated firms in manufacturing prototype products.[58]

That trend for design exhibitions of a didactic nature to have conceptual displays as well as displays of exemplary manufactured goods was not sustained in subsequent British exhibitions. Hence the disappointment of pro-Modernists when the much-vaunted *1935 Art & Industry* exhibition resorted to spectacular specimen rooms created by leading architects and designers such as the garden dining room in carved and sand-blasted marble and terrazzo designed by architect, Oliver Hill. Read, in a scathing critique of the exhibition commented of those supposedly conceptual designs:

> '…what we have assembled in these specimen rooms is not a series of prototypes which industry can, as it were, take over and reproduce in quantities for the benefit of the majority, but a collection of arbitrary articles which, even if they could be adapted to the processes of modern machine production, would be useless and costly in most houses. … For the people such an exhibition is supposed to benefit, this exhibition is a piece of heartless and extravagant snobbery.'[59]

Not surprisingly the *1935 Art & Industry* exhibition was vilified in pro-Modernist journals, especially the DIA journal, *Design for Today* and in the *Architectural Review.* Indeed in a

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[57] The exhibition and its various sections of display was extensively reviewed and illustrated in a long feature article by Joseph Peter Thorp with contributions from John Gloag, Harry Trethowan (ceramics) Dorothy Todd (textiles), M.L. Anderson (glass): 'Scenario for a National Exhibition', *Architectural Review, LXXIV,* 1933, pp 20 – 42

[58] For example, there were several small British firms associated with the design and production of experimental furniture, especially utilising "new" materials such as plywood, tubular steel and glass in the 1930s, including Jack Pritchard's Isokon , PEL and Plan Ltd . Other firms such as Best & Lloyd made new types of metal and glass lighting inspired by Bauhaus examples.

review article in the former the exhibition was described as '...a dangerous failure'.[60] Much scorn was poured on the display methods used in the large painting galleries of Burlington House which design reformists found to be too reverential and precious for the 'everyday' objects on display.[61] The most severe criticism focussed on the selection of items and settings associated with upper class lifestyles (and on the neglect of an opportunity to build upon the democratic and conceptual outlook fostered by the Modernists in 1933).[62]

Although there was a general feeling in Modernist circles that ground had been lost since the *1933 Dorland Hall* exhibition, from a less radical perspective it can be argued that design exhibitions generally stimulated public awareness and debate about Modernist design and encouraged manufacturers to produce items to meet with the criteria of their selection committees.[63] Nonetheless, despite their ambitions to promote more democratic attitudes to domestic design and/or industrially-made products for the home the displays devoted to individual media, especially ceramics and glass betray middle and upper class tastes and lifestyles (as in the preponderance of items such as sherry decanters, cocktail sets, wine sets, rose bowls and flower vases). One of the more positive reviews in *The Studio*, whilst acknowledging that '...the old faults and virtues of British manufacturers and craftsmen are still with us', nonetheless saw it as potentially '...the first of a series of exhibitions which will

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[59] Herbert Read, 'Novelism at the Royal Academy', *Architectural Review, LXXVII,* Feb. 1935, pp 45 – 50

[60] See the editorial article, 'A Challenge', *Design for Today,* Feb 1935, pp. 45 - 47

[61] The architect and design reformer Christian Barman FRIBA wrote in his preview of the exhibition: '...Everybody knows those gloomy galleries with their cliff-like, top-lighted walls and beetling over-doors: it would be difficult to think of more unsuitable or more uncongenial quarters. ....To arrange the exhibits round the walls in showcase fashion is hardly to make the most of your possibilities....' 'Industrial Art at the Royal Academy', *Design for Today,* Jan.1935, pp 5-11

[62] See the vitriolic review by Hugh Quigley, who wrote: '....It provided the material for the equipment of a highly expensive modern flat furnished and planned along Edwardian lines. It makes quite subtly but unmistakably, class distinction as between that section of the population which is sufficiently endowed with wealth to afford the frills and fantasies of the Royal Academy and that vastly greater section of the population which has got to live by, and use, the products of industrial design.' H. Quigley, 'The Royal Academy of British Art in Industry', *Design for Today,* Feb. 1935, pp 48 - 52.

[63] That certainly seems to have been the case with Mappin & Webb who commissioned Murray to design a single range of silver and silver-plate items for them, several of which were selected for the 1935 Art in Industry exhibition. According to Murray, Mappin & Webb only produced those items as prototypes (although they appear in a promotional booklet for the firm, c 1935). If Murray's account is accurate (and I have no reason to believe otherwise, especially as there are only two or three examples of Keith Murray's designs for Mappin & Webb in public collections,) then one could take the cynical view that this prestigious firm was 'jumping on the Modernist bandwagon' in the hope of courting publicity in a national exhibition of design.

steadily advance towards 'a new British art in industry'.'[64] The next of its kind, he argued, must '...explore more fully the capacity of British industry to provide satisfactory shapes and materials by means of the machine and for mass production – excluding pure handicraft as a field already known and surveyed.'[65]

There were attempts following on from the *1935 Art and Industry* exhibition to re-focus interest and debate on more democratic approaches to design for modern living.[66] One direct response was a 67-page supplement published in *Architectural Review* set out as a catalogue for a hypothetical exhibition of objects of 'everyday use'.[67] It consisted of photographic illustrations of 'standard products' selected from existing manufacturers' lines that the writer considered to be of good, Modernist British design and easily affordable. It was followed by a smaller-scale exhibition in 1936 on the same theme, *Design of Everyday Things,* held at the Royal Institute of British Architects' new headquarters in Portland Place, London.

However, the extent to which the 'everyday things' were indeed affordable (and could therefore be perceived as an index of the progress towards Modernism) was challenged in a short but perceptive editorial piece in *The Studio,* 'What are Everyday Things?'[68] It questioned whether the exhibition truly represented '...things in general use by everyday people ... things produced for the majority, upon which industry depends for its life.' Holmes reviewed the price range of textiles exhibited against recent statistical data about national earnings which showed that 85% of the nation's population had an income of less than £5.00 per week (and 67% had an income of less than £3.00 per week). On the basis of the breakdown of expenditure against income he concluded that the biggest sector of the population had little or no money to purchase anything other than bare necessities for living and questioned whether '...any of the vast majority (could) afford the things shown at this exhibition'

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[64] W. Grant, 'British Art in Industry', *The Studio,CIX,* Feb. 1935, pp 55 – 67

[65] Ibid

[66] Fiona MacCarthy argued that the perceived failure of the *1935 Art in Industry* exhibition was indeed cathartic and she likened its effects to those following on from the 1851 Exhibition, similarly reviled by design reformers. She wrote: 'For as the Crystal Palace had caused the Cole reformers to pause, take stock and start on a new constructive phase, this latest grotesque failure, which sent shudders down the spine of the supporters of the British modern movement, was in the end quite useful. It stimulated action.' That action, according to MacCarthy, was represented in a few quarters by its concern to discuss and applaud design of utilitarian character. See Fiona MacCarthy, *A History of British Design 1830 – 1970,* George Allen & Unwin, 1979, pp 60 -62.

[67] Special supplement in *Architectural Review, LXXVIII,* pp 223 -300

[68] C.G.Holme,'What are Everyday Things?', *The Studio, CXI,* 1936, p 285

A glance at an illustrated review of the *Design of Everyday Things* exhibition (written by 'A Man in the Street') supports Holme's criticism. Photographs of the exhibits include saucepans '...prices range from 10d upwards' (in decimal terms, 4p) but also dressing table equipment '...from 2s 6d for a powder bowl to £15.10s for a brush set in pale green shagreen...' (i.e. 12 _ p. – £15.50).[69] The latter display included a cut glass bathroom set with fashionable black stopper designed by Murray. A powder bowl from that range was 24s (i.e. £1.20) and a large bath salts jar was 35s (i.e. £1.75) so they were definitely not at the cheaper end of the price spectrum and those two items alone amounted to the average weekly wage of two thirds of the population of Britain.[70] In the light of that revelation, Holmes' concluding remarks fundamentally challenged the ability of celebrated industrial designers of Murray's calibre to transform industrial production along anything other than aesthetic lines:

> 'Design in industry will only be improved when it is realised that the majority of the nation are compelled to buy in the cheapest market; that usefulness, durability, strength and price have to be the deciding factors in choice. When the advocate of better design accepts this fact and starts from there to improve the standard of design in things which must be sold at the lowest possible price, then and not till then will art and industry draw together and begin to raise the standards.
>
> Let us face facts as they are and give up deceiving ourselves.' [71]

The discussion above about the importance of design exhibitions in promoting a Modernist agenda highlights the complex aims (and consequential fragmentation) of the design reform message as it became more engaged with Modernism. What had initially started out as an agenda for the improvement of design standards in the manufacturing industries for a brief time showed signs of becoming an organ for the radical reappraisal of design in line with Modern Movement ideology. That seemed to have been achieved in 1933 as the exhibition held that year was regarded as a real attempt to engage with concepts exploring more experimental approaches to living in the Modern Age. The consequences of the longer term failure to engage designers, manufacturers and the public in a more radical discourse about design and society do not need further explication in this thesis. It amply makes the point that what I have called 'progressive design' in Britain in the 1930s embraced a broad spectrum of

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[69] A Man in the Street, 'Design in Everyday Things', *Design for Today,* April 1936, pp144 - 153

[70] Details of prices taken from the Special supplement in *Architectural Review, LXXVIII,* pp 223 -300, which featured a Keith Murray bathroom set in cut crystal with black glass tops. No 519A', p296. That design is identical to the items featured in the illustration of the *Design in Everyday Things* exhibition cited above.

positions with regard to improving the aesthetics of material culture at one end to transforming the social experience of modern life at the other (see Chapter One, for an extended discussion of the various progressive strands in the design reform movement between the Wars). So collaborative projects such as the staging of national design exhibitions with didactic aims were potentially fraught in terms of critical evaluations of their worth and success dependent on whether the writer was a Modern Movement protagonist, a promoter of design in industry or something in between.

Paradoxically, Murray emerged from this critical hiatus surrounding the design exhibitions of the 1930s with respect on all sides. His designs were featured in all of the British design exhibitions mentioned in the discussion above and was frequently cited or illustrated in reviews of the exhibitions as exemplary work, even though the same writer may have been dissatisfied with the exhibition as a whole. One comment by architect designer, Serge Chermayeff, whose interiors for the BBC aligned him with the arch-Modernist, Wells Coates, suggests that Murray's reputation as a leading industrial designer was enhanced through his exposure in those exhibitions:

> 'It would do an immense amount of good to industrial design in this country to throw aside for one moment this British exclusiveness and to hold here, under tested expert organisation, an Exhibition in which some of the so-called industrial designers could be confronted with their own work side by side with those of let us say, Gropius, Maholy-Nagy [sic], Wells Coates, Keith Murray and others, displayed by a Committee under the leadership of Gropius, Mies Vander Röhe [sic] or Van Wersin, who have in the last decade been directly or indirectly responsible for industrial design and exhibitions of the highest class...'[72]

Promoting the 'designer' product

It is thus important, especially in the context of this study of a designer's collaboration with three manufacturers, to evaluate the power and benefits of design exhibitions for manufacturers and designers. That distinction is easier to comprehend in terms of the positive publicity and public relations opportunities that Murray's growing reputation as a designer of note generated in the design and lifestyle press in the form of positive commentary and

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[71] C..G..Holme, 'What are Everyday Things?'op.cit. p285

illustrations in features on modern design and living. In 1933, the editor of *The Studio* summarised the effort and strategy that his journal had employed to improve industrial design in Britain, a vital part of which was in publishing illustrations of exemplary work and '...showing the value of good designs in articles of domestic use...' in features devoted to glass, pottery and silverware.[73] In that respect, the editor argued, '...*The Studio*'s illustrations in themselves constitute a monthly exhibition...' and ' ...(it) has in that sense ...given constant exhibitions of the best British industrial art (as) may clearly be seen by looking back over articles that appeared in the last few years.'

Holmes implicitly paralleled the didactic industrial design exhibition with the design journal in terms of creating hypothetical displays by means of editorial and illustrative content. In reality, there were more complex interconnections between them as evidenced by the example of the conceptualisation of an 'alternative' exhibition of Art and Industry by *Architectural Review.*[74] The most straightforward connection revealed by this study that looks at the public presentation and critical reception of Murray's design is that the design exhibition was a principal stimulant for articles in design or lifestyle journals. For example throughout the 1930s *The Studio* reported on Murray's work for Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood, often but not always in connection with major design exhibitions at home and abroad.[75] So although its major review of the *1935 Art & Industry* exhibition featured an illustration of a Keith Murray coffee set for Wedgwood *The Studio* also discussed or illustrated Murray's work in other contexts during that year.[76] These included an article, on glass ('Glass of today and how to choose it for use and decoration in the home'), which showed designs for simple glasses and decanters by Keith Murray. On the same page was a

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[72] A report of Serge Chermeyeff's comments in a debate about 'Design for Selling' organised by the Publicity Club of London, 'Design and the Machine Age', *Design for Today,* March 1935, pp 108 -109

[73] C.G. Holme, (editorial) 'The *The Studio*'s Leadership: *The Studio*'s Campaign for Improved Industrial Design Vindicated', *The Studio, CV,* March 1933, pp 139 – 141. The editorial was related to a previous article that upheld the principles of the recently published *Gorrell Report,* which advocated the establishment of a permanent exhibition of design.

[74] Special supplement in *ArchitecturalReview,* Op Cit.

[75] See for example - Author unknown, 'Art of the Table – designs in the public eye: Examples from the Brussels Exhibition', *The Studio, CX, 1935, pp 88 – 95.* This reviewed examples of domestic objects on display in the international exhibition held in Brussels in 1935. It included a double page photographic spread of Keith Murray and John Skeaping's designs for Wedgwood. The caption to the images also included a reference to Keith Murray's own exhibition at the Medici Gallery, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

[76] W. Grant, 'British Art in Industry', *The Studio CIX,* February 1935, pp 55 -70

photograph of a more conventional cut glass drinks set made by Stuart Crystal, which the writer thought by comparison with Murray's work was '...less courageous in design'.[77]

The editor of the *The Studio*, C. G. Holme, was clearly keen to include illustrations of Murray's work in the journal following the trade launch of the Keith Murray glass in January 1933. That same month he included an illustration of an engraved vase in his selection of exemplary new designs for the regular editorial review feature, 'Fine Craftsmanship'.[78] Later that year he endorsed the new venture by designing and organising a display of table settings featuring modern glass, ceramics and silver for exhibiting at the Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Company showrooms in Bond Street, London. An illustration in the 'Fine Craftsmanship' feature showed one setting from the exhibition that included glass designed by Murray alongside Danish porcelain and silverware.[79] The same article also included a single photograph of an engraved vase by Murray with the caption:

> '....While being essentially English in character, this piece of glass succeeded in getting out of the rut which has so long been a fault in English design. Congratulations are due to the makers in their choice of so able a designer.'[80]

Holmes's steady promotion of Murray's work continued albeit on an ad hoc basis such as when he selected illustrations and wrote the captions for an article on British ceramic design on behalf of its author Harry Trethowan.[81] Four of the fifteen photographs chosen by Holmes were of Murray's designs for Wedgwood. These were accompanied by short but positive captions that emphasised the designer's name such as '...Bowls and flat vases designed by Keith Murray for Wedgwood's [sic], which have a certain architectural quality, which seem pleasing...'[82] and:

> '... Two more forms by Keith Murray for Wedgwood's. The decoration relies on the potter's work not on hand painting. The pot should be useful

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[77] J.B. Perry Robinson , 'The Art of Home Planning: Glass of today and how to choose it for use and decoration in the home', *The Studio, CX,,* 1935, pp 202 - 207

[78] C.G. Holme, 'Fine Craftsmanship, January 1933' *Studio, CV,* January, 1933, pp 61 -70

[79] Ibid. That particular setting combined Keith Murray table glass, Royal Copenhagen porcelain dinner service, George Jensen silver cutlery and ceramic ornaments by Hedebo.

[80] C.G. Holme, 'Fine Craftsmanship' *The Studio, CVI,* 1933, pp 116 – 117

[81] Harry Trethowan, 'Modern British Pottery Design', *The Studio, CVI,* 1933, pp 181- 188. (The illustrations and captions that accompany this piece were chosen by the editor, C.G. Holmes)

[82] Ibid p 186

> for some medium-stemmed plants and it would be interesting to see an exhibition of flower arrangements with pots suited to the flowers'.[83]

That idea seems to have developed because two years later Holmes submitted a short illustrated feature, 'Glass, an Accompaniment to Flowers and Wine' illustrated with six table arrangements showing flowers arranged in vases and wine sets by individual British manufacturers.[84] His premise was that '...glass, if carefully designed, can enhance the beauty of the natural habit of plants as it can the colour and the aroma of the wine it contains.'[85] The photograph showing decanters, wine glasses and a large undecorated vase made by Stevens & Williams is clearly the work of Keith Murray.

The Studio's support for Murray's glass range from 1931 onwards was underlined by its inclusion of an example of Murray's engraved glass in *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Arts* published in December that year.[86] In summing up *The Studio*'s contribution to improving industrial design Holme emphasised the contribution of *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Arts, (*which he also edited), to cultivating and disseminating what he called 'the new movement in design'. That in his terms was characterised by '...new ideas, theories and experiments on the continent of Europe since the war.' [87] Of the *Yearbook* he wrote, '...the best of British work was ranged side by side with that of the most advanced moderns in the world'. Its effects upon British design '...can easily be proved by a study of subsequent achievements of British designers illustrated in *The Studio* and shown by the catalogues and shop windows of enlightened traders.'[88] Judging by the many illustrations of and references to Murray's work in *The Studio* and the frequent inclusions of his designs in the *Yearbook of Decorative Arts* throughout the 1930s, the proactive agenda of the editorial staff was effective in establishing Murray as a noteworthy and significant British industrial designer.[89]

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[83] Ibid p 184

[84] Holmes organised this small exhibition for the Fourth Annual Glass Convention held in Folkestone, Kent in 1935

[85] C.G. Holmes, "Glass, an Accompaniment to Flowers and Wine', *The Studio, CX,* 1935, pp 3-4.

[86] C.G. Holmes (editor), *Decorative Arts Year Book*, 1933, p 83.

[87] C.G. Holme, (editorial) '*The Studio*'s Leadership...', op cit p 141

[88] Ibid

[89] Designs by Murray were selected for *Decorative Arts Yearbook* on a yearly basis from 1933 – 1940 inclusive in the following categories: 1933 –glass; 1934 – glass; 1935 – glass and ceramics; 1936 – glass, ceramics, silver; 1937 – ceramics; 1938 – glass and ceramics (three separate illustrations); 1940 – glass. *The Studio* continued to

However, by its own standards the public and professional image of Murray that emerged in the pages of its publications was also an index of its own successful leadership in promulgating the ideal of Modernist design in Britain.

That successful image has to be examined in the context of *The Studio's* interpretation of what it saw as the 'new movement in design'.[90] In 1933, Holme had emphasised the importance of (Continental) European theorists and practitioners (including Le Corbusier) to that movement.[91] However, analysis of *The Studio*'s reporting on international trends from about the time of the *1930 Stockholm Exhibition* has established that its focus shifted to the Scandinavian countries and increasingly to the United States rather than France or Germany.[92] Taking that into account, *The Studio's* advocacy of Murray appears less radically inflected (as one might expect from a journal which started life as the mouthpiece of the Arts & Crafts Movement). That is also perceptible in the nature of much of its editorial content, which implicitly advanced the cause of industrial design whilst explicitly reporting on products in bourgeois and consumer-lifestyle terms.[93] Thus when Fry wrote retrospectively of two camps within the design reform movement in Britain in the 1930s his judgement could have been influenced by the nature of *The Studio's* Modernist discourse pertaining to the Modern Movement.[94]

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take an interest in Keith Murray's designs after the war as evidenced by the inclusion of an unusual covered box with hand-turned 'runner beads' manufactured by Wedgwood in *Decorative Arts Yearbook* for 1949. It was one of a very few pottery designs that Murray undertook for the firm during the war years.

[90] C.G. Holmes, (editorial), '*The Studio*'s Leadership...', op cit p141

[91] Holme's assertion of *The Studio* and *Decorative Art's* reportage of European Modernism from 1929 to 1933, (when the article was written) is borne out by a survey of some of the editorial content from that period. Key items include the dialectical discussion on new materials for furnishings by John Gloag and Charlotte Perriand, (see John Gloag, and Charlotte Perriand, 'Wood or Metal?', *The Studio, XCVII*, Jan. 1929, pp 278 – 279) and several articles relating to Modern architecture and town planning in Europe. The latter includes an article on housing estates and town planning in Berlin (see Bruno Taut, 'The Nature and Aims of Architecture', *The Studio, XCVII*, 1929, pp 169 – 174) and two lengthy articles debating Le Corbusier's approach to town planning (see Oliver Bernard, 'The City of Tomorrow', *The Studio, XCVIII*, 1929, pp 612 – 624 and Frank Pick, 'The Way of Tomorrow and the Traffic Problem', *The Studio, XCVIII*, 1929, pp 624 -628).

[92] See Appendix X which lists some article titles from the *The Studio* pertaining to firstly Scandinavian design and secondly to American design to support my argument (note that there are many other instances where Scandinavian and/or American designs were discussed or illustrated in more general reviews or surveys not included in the table)

[93] See for example my previous references to articles which featured Murray's work, including the monthly 'Fine Craftsmanship' feature that was subtitled 'The Editor Selects examples of contemporary wares, distinguished for beauty or interest of their design...' and other features on formal table settings and wine and flowers.

[94] Diane Taylor, Correspondence with Maxwell Fry (op cit)

However, as this detailed and complex examination of how Murray himself, the firms for which he worked and the various bodies and journals who reported on or promoted his work as a designer reveals, his reputation as an important designer had at least three different facets. The first was as a specialist glass designer under the long term patronage of a leading traditional glass firm; the second was as a ceramic designer again under the patronage of a leading and historical pottery firm and the third was as a modern independent industrial designer successfully working across a range of media. Those three facets followed the same chronological order with the third manifestation emerging as Murray's work across a range of media was noted and publicised in the design press.[95]

The discussion of Murray's own writings on design argued that his perception of industrial design was predicated on the idea of a versatile (and architect-trained) designer who could apply his methodology to a range of media and industries. This study has produced evidence that Murray actively cultivated the public image of the professional independent designer for industry. Again the confluence of a key exhibition and consequential journal review article marks the consolidation of his stature as a significant designer for industry. That exhibition was *Glass, Pottery & Silver designed by Keith Murray, ARIBA* and it comprised exclusively of his own work in three media at the Medici Galleries in Grafton Street, London in 1935.[96] It was reviewed by the glass specialist and DIA stalwart M.L. Anderson in *Design for Today* in an article titled 'Industrial Design in Three Materials' [97] The Medici Society galleries had a long history of exhibiting pottery, glass and metalwork in *The Studio* tradition as well as contemporary painting, but an exhibition devoted to industrially produced 'designer' products was a new venture for them.[98]

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[95] See table in Appendix IX, op cit. Note that Murray began to gain a public profile firstly as a designer of glass in 1932 (after the *Copenhagen Exhibition*), secondly as a designer of ceramics (after the *1933 Dorland Hall* exhibition) and as a designer in glass, ceramics and metal (at the time of the *1935 Art & Industry* exhibition).

[96] The Medici Society Ltd. was a long term business member of the DIA (as were firms such as Gordon Russell Ltd, Heal & Son Ltd and Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd). The Medici Society also had a small catalogue of domestic wares and ornaments sold through their galleries, which included glass designs by Keith Murray. The firm's printed brochure of Easter cards and presents for 1935 includes an illustration of a coloured and undecorated glass vase and bowl, captioned 'Designed by Keith Murray. Vase 2/6; Bowl, 10/6.' Copy courtesy of the Medici Society Ltd.,32 - 42 Pentonville Road, London

[97] M.L. Anderson, 'Industrial Design in Three Materials', *Design for Today, 3,* Aug, 1935, pp 318 – 320

[98] The Medici Galleries' printed brochure of Easter cards and presents for 1935 includes an illustration of a coloured and undecorated glass vase and bowl, captioned 'Designed by Keith Murray. Vase 2/6; Bowl, 10/6.' Copy courtesy of the Medici Society Ltd.,32 - 42 Pentonville Road, London

It was opened by Sir William Llewellyn, the President of the Royal Academy[99] and in his opening speech he praised Murray's innovation in initiating what he believed to be the first 'one-man show' of the work of an industrial designer.[100] Llewellyn clearly believed that his support for such an exhibition in a fine art location required some justification because he went on to explain that the work exhibited by Murray was '…good art as it is understood to be today not the good art as it was understood say fifty or sixty years ago.' What made his designs '...the very essence of good art…' was that in all the forms '…there is great simplicity and good shape.' Speaking of the exhibits, he claimed somewhat erroneously, that they were '…factory-made things…all produced by machinery in great quantities and … all the more important therefore that the design should be good at the very beginning.' Llewellyn's interpretation of 'industrial design' in the context of Murray's exhibition is interesting because it expresses both a platonic conception of the industrial designer as giver-of-form and one based on the conception of the industrial designer as a specialist in mechanised mass production. Both of those interpretations fell within the Modernist spectrum of ideas about the nature of industrial design in what Reyner Banham subsequently labelled 'the First Machine Age'.[101] Taken together they articulate the central paradox that Banham identified in the architecture and design of the International Style. That was the search for ideal forms for the products of the machine age (a universalising and essentialist conceptualisation of design-as-type), which had its counter position in demands to innovate economic designs appropriate to mass production technology (a flexible and evolving concept of design-as-process).[102]

Although Llewellyn's speech drew on the discourse of designing for the machine the general tone of his speech suggests that he only engaged superficially with its rhetoric. However, whilst he was trying to explain the significance of Murray's exhibition for both art and industrial design, he may have overlooked a more straightforward explanation that related pragmatically to Murray's emergent reputation as a commercial designer. There is no evidence of how the idea for such as exhibition was first mooted or indeed if it were Murray's

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[99] Llewellyn was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the *1935 Art and Industry Exhibition.*

[100] Copy of speech given at the opening of the exhibition in 1935, set out as a press release, courtesy of the Medici Society Ltd.,32 - 42 Pentonville Road, London

[101] Reyner Banham, *Theory & Design in the First Machine Age,* Architectural Press, 1960 (reprinted 1982) – 'The First Machine Age' encompassed the groups and movements contributing to the early decades of the Modern Movement in architecture, urban design and to a lesser extent industrial design in the twentieth century.

[102] Ibid, see Banham's concluding argument 'Functionalism & Technology', pp 320-330.

own idea to stage it. However, given its proximity to the *1935 Art & Industry* exhibition it arguably functioned as a showcase through which he could consolidate and make public his transformation from architect-designer to the new professional rank of industrial designer.

Marketing the 'designer' product

The discussion of Murray's designs within Modernist critical frameworks has been biased either towards awarding him due recognition as one of Britain's most progressive designers of the inter-war period or to locating his designs in the 'Modern Camp'. Those biases have caused other innovative aspects of Murray's designs to be overlooked, especially with regard to their role in emergent lifestyle and consumer cultures. Indeed the 1930s was arguably the first 'designer decade' in the modern sense of attaching importance to the role of industrial design as a marketing concept although the practice was still in its infancy in Britain.[103] By contrast, the role of industrial designer was more developed and more commercially integrated in the USA where there was a more developed consumer market and more support from industry for new and modernised products. Heskett outlined the emergence of what he called the professional industrial design consultant in America where a handful of practitioners, such as Raymond Loewy, Norman Bel Geddes, Henry Dreyfuss and Walter Dorwin Teague became household names in the inter-war period.[104] Typically they worked in a range of manufacturing industries (embracing both light domestic production and mechanical engineering) as design and marketing consultants.[105] They were brought in by manufacturers to analyse the requirements of the marketplace and offer 'streamlined' design 'solutions' for new or modernised products.

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[103] Although John Heskett argued that the role of industrial designer was not widely established in Europe until after the Second World War he outlined a number of examples that heralded the emergence of this new professional role for designers working in close association with manufacturers. These included Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Walter Maria Kersting in Germany, Alvar Aaalto in Finland, Gio Ponti in Italy, Marcel Breuer, Wells Coates and Gordon and Dick (R.D.) Russell in Britain and Wilhem Kåge, Simon Gate and Edward Hald in Sweden. See John Heskett, *Industrial Design,* op.cit. pp 111 –119

[104] Ibid. pp 105 – 126 .

[105] That first generation of commercial industrial designers in the USA tended to have previous commercial design experience in for example, advertising or display. Their commercial awareness was rapidly transformed into marketing expertise. The American industrial designer was understood to have an informed sense of what the customer wanted, needed or desired.

Social historians, William Leiss, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally cite the seminal influence of one of those practitioners, Egmont Arens who coined the term 'consumer engineering' in support of his design philosophy. Arens, who typical of American industrial designers combined the skills of the product designer with specialist marketing knowledge (he was also a packaging designer), advocated that manufacturers must create products in line with consumers wants and aspirations.[106] To what extent that market knowledge was supported by scientific method is debatable, nonetheless several American industrial designers published books setting out their design ethos and analysing important projects all of which imbued the occupation with a certain professional gravitas.[107] What seem to have been the major distinctions between the British and the American industrial designer of the inter-war period were the latter's commercial savvy and the consequent focus on identifying and stimulating consumer markets.[108]

Analysis of Murray's writings about the role and methods of the designer in industry has shown that they were devoid of any references to the users of his products (let alone any discursive reference to 'markets' or 'consumers'). What seems in retrospect to have been a blind spot in Murray's professional outlook probably reflects the general backwardness of British industry, which although at the time was the most established manufacturing country in the world, had not yet embraced the emergent science of marketing. Research of Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams's inter-war history as discussed in Chapters Two and Three has demonstrated that trade promotions and trade fairs (especially the annual BIF) were the conduit through which those firms tested out new lines on the market. The principal actors in those arenas were the companies' representatives (often directorial staff as well as its sales team) and the buyers for stores and retailers. The public's view was never sought directly but reports in the trade press indicate that the professional buyer was capable of second-guessing what his or her particular clientele would be buying that year.[109] Thus for

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[106] William Leiss, Stephen Kline & Sut Jhally , *Social Communication in advertising: Persons, Products & Images of Well-being,* 2nd Edition, (1990) this version, Routledge (1997), p 83

[107] For example: Norman Bel Geddes, *Horizons,* 1932 and Walter Dorwin Teague, *Design This Day: the Technique of Order in the Machine Age,* 1940 Raymond Loewy's, tables showing evolutionary principals in design were published in a book that explained the significance of the industrial design phenomenon in the USA, see Cheney, S & Cheney, M.C, *Art and the Machine: An Account of Industrial Design in 20th Century America,* McGraw-Hill, USA 1936.

[108] See Jeffrey Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925 – 1939,* Philadelphia, 1979, pp 104 – 107

[109] Note the authoritative tone suggested in the title of a public lecture in Stoke-on-Trent given by a Mrs Copeland M.P. speaking on behalf of pottery manufacturers: 'Pottery and What the Public Wants', printed with post-lecture discussion in *PGGTR,* June 1st 1934, pp 715 -721. One respondent in the audience complained in

many British manufacturing firms there was no need to conceptualise its public clientele in marketing terms as their trade was with retail specialists.

What seems to have been the principal difference on the US scene was the influence of advertising agencies that fostered loyalty in the buying public through more advanced brand-building strategies. Evidence that the US market had a more developed consumer-awareness is offered by advertising historian, Roland Marchand who made a major study of American display advertising of the inter-war period.[110] Part of his study detailed the various demographic-gathering and attitude-testing strategies employed by advertising agencies in their role as intermediary between manufacturing client and the public.[111]

The DIA had long recognised that the lack of informed intermediaries in British retailing was a major obstacle to design reform. It was problematic from the reformers' point-of-view because manufacturers did not consult with their public in any direct way and therefore made assumptions about the public's needs and tastes or relied upon the judgement of buyers and provincial retailers.[112] Pevsner argued for a more systematic analysis of consumer tastes and for testing out new designs on the market that employed a direct approach with the public.[113] He pioneered the use of consumer surveys to gauge public taste and to test out new designs on consumers for his survey of industrial arts in Britain.[114] However, despite that approach he was frequently mystified by some of the responses (especially when they did not concur with

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response: 'The public had to have what the retail buyers chose for them, and one supposed that the retail buyers had to have what the wholesale buyers chose for them – and so on'. Ibid. p 719.

[110] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity 1920 – 1940,* University of Californian Press, 1985.

[111] These included new concepts such a as Gallup Polls (started in 1931), media circulation and audience figures, readership profiles, consumer profiling and consumer surveys and opinion testing techniques that pre-date today's 'focus groups' such as advertising tests. Ibid - Ch 3, 'Keeping the Audience in Focus', pp 52 -87

[112] This point was made in an address to the DIA by a Professor Constable who was emphatic in his assertion that '...too much power lies at present in the hands of the distributor and the commercial traveller. The distributor's methods of sale or display affect public demand irrespective of the merits of a design'. He urged manufacturers to '...get more directly in touch with the market and be more high-handed with the distributor and commercial traveller.' Op cit 'The Manufacturer and The Designer' 1936.

[113] Nikolaus Pevsner, 'The Duties of the Manufacturer and the Retailer', in op cit. *Enqury,* pp 229 – 231.

[114] His methods show that he was familiar with the pioneering of consumer surveys by manufacturers and advertising agencies in the USA. In a review of a pilot survey he undertook in 1935, Pevsner cited an American study, (D. Starch, *Principles of Advertising,* Chicago, 1923, p 29). See Nikolaus Pevsner, 'A Questionnaire on Industrial Art', *Design for Today,* April 1935, pp 145 – 146.

his own Modernist leanings).[115] Thus much of the discourse in British design reform was couched in terms of freeing the public from the controlling influence that the manufacturer and retailer maintained over the design of commercial goods. In that context the new designer for industry was charged with the social role of interpreting the public's needs and putting the manufacturer in touch with his public. Murray, who held firm views about design reform, had clearly internalised arguments that conceptualised the designer's role as an intermediary. Although he was not an arrogant man he probably saw himself as instinctively knowing what was good for the public in terms of glass and ceramic design, hence the absence of commentary on and the evident lack of interest in consumers' needs and tastes.

There is also no evidence of Murray marketing himself as a commercial designer in order to expand his design consultancy into a business (aside from the singular event of his one-man design show). His first published article might have been undertaken with publicity in mind, however his subsequent writings took on a more hostile attitude to one of the industries that employed him (as discussed earlier in this chapter) so self-promotion does not seem to have been the priority when making public addresses. Yet by staging an exhibition of his own designs Murray showed more initiative than any of his British peers. Thus, although I have noted that there was little of what we would now call marketing science applied to the conceptualisation and promotion of Murray's designs, his meteoric rise to success as one of Britain's foremost industrial designers was not achieved without careful cultivation and strategic promotion.

That process had at least three significant aspects, two of which have already been discussed in this chapter. Perhaps the most important was the critical attention and acclaim that Murray's designs received in the design press and in important public design exhibitions that put him at the centre of the design reform movement in Britain (and ultimately saw him in receipt of the highest honour that could be awarded to a designer in Britain). Related to that critical arena was the cultivation of his profile as a professional designer particularly via his own published writings, public talks and his one-man design exhibition. The third aspect, which is interconnected with the other two, was the promotion of Murray's work by the three

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[115] Ibid p 145. He was only able to make the most tenuous conclusions about his respondents' design preferences in relation to their age and class from that pilot survey (undertaken at an Industrial Art exhibition in Birmingham in 1934). His most confident conclusion in relation to the taste in pottery was: '...if enough good modern things are offered they will capture the market. But if only bad things are seen the public will take to them; which brings home very clearly the responsibility of the manufacturer.'

firms for whom he worked, but particularly Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood, which is discussed in detail in Part Three of this chapter.[116]

'Signature-designers'

The studies in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis outlined Murray's working relationship with his two principal clients and the type of goods that Murray designed for them. Those firms' 'designer ranges', complete with the Keith Murray facsimile signature also acknowledged new directions in social and consumption trends relating to modern lifestyles. In that respect the Keith Murray phenomenon was different to those firms' previous experiences with ranges by named artists or designers. British manufacturers in the quality sector associated with the decorative arts had a long tradition of commissioning artists to design special patterns for prestigious ranges, but very little experience of employing professional design consultants to make new lines for general production.[117] Wedgwood's long history of accrediting both leading staff designers' and outside designers' work (and of applying designers' signatures to special lines) was discussed in Chapter Three. The case was made that Murray occupied a unique position as a pottery designer (not an artist or sculptor) retained primarily to create new body shapes rather than decorative or ornamental wares.

At the time when Murray joined Stevens & Williams all of its ranges were designed in house either by its Managing Director or by staff designers of little renown outside the works. In the firm's heyday in the late 19th century it had employed first class glass artists for its finest productions such as John Northwood who designed and executed prestigious pieces often for

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[116] Although I have distinguished three distinct strands they were not entirely separate as in for example the reportage of Murray in the design press. Frequently there was overlap between the discussion and promotion of Murray's work in the editorial content and in the advertising content of the same journals because sometimes both Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood would place display advertisements featuring designs by Keith Murray in lifestyle and design journals. That occurred in 1933 when both Wedgwood and Stevens & Williams launched their Keith Murray ranges to the public. For example, Stevens & Williams took a full page display advertisement captioned 'Modern English Glass designed by Keith Murray' in *Design For Today,* July 1933 and Wedgwood took a half page advertisement in December that year to promote the in-store exhibition of Keith Murray's new shapes at John Lewis. Several of the monthly editions of *Design For Today* had editorial content announcing the new range during that year and the June issue included an article by Murray on the design of glass.

[117] A famous and early example of an independent design consultant was the 19th century British designer, Christopher Dresser, (1834 -1904) Dresser made designs in ceramics, glass, metal and wood for a range of clients including Elkingtons, Minton and James Couper & Sons of Glasgow.

exhibition display.[118] The term 'glass artist' in this context denotes the specialist glass decorator who played an important part in the design of artistic pieces for firms associated with the manufacture of art glass in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These men, usually employed as staff designers, were both creative and technical specialists and they were also encouraged to experiment with new techniques and effects. Thus they occupied a more elevated and honoured role than their twentieth century staff designer counterparts in traditional British glass making firms.[119] They were rarely independent designers and typically were employed for long periods at the handful of firms that had begun to specialise in artistic glass.[120] The employment of specialist artist craftsmen, including John Northwood's son, John Northwood II, Frederick Carder (1863 – 1963) who went on to found the Steuben Glass works in the USA, and Joseph Keller marked out Stevens & Williams as a quality producer of artistically distinguished wares, which was good for trade and for its high class reputation. That reputation survived into the twentieth century despite the fact that the firm neither commissioned nor employed any designers of note after their departure until Murray's time.

Murray's position at Stevens & Williams as an outside designer from an architectural background was thus qualitatively different from the more conventional role of specialist designer-decorator. The status of the objects he designed was both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the convention of art glass because they were not made or

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[118] John Northwood (1836 – 1902) was Artistic Director at Stevens & Williams from 1882 – 1902. He was associated with the art of cameo glass and was celebrated in the industry for making the first reproduction in glass of the Portland Vase between 1873 and 1876 during which time he was a partner at the Redhouse Glassworks in the Stourbridge area. He specialised in designing for the cameo technique and also for crimped ornamental wares in the Japanese style. Refs: Dan Klein & Ward Lloyd (eds) (1984), *The History of Glass,* this edition reprinted under the Black Cat (London) imprint, 1993, see Roger Dodsworh , Chapter Seven 'The 19th Century', pp 169 – 198.

[119] Ibid. The principal firms associated with Art glass in the 19th century were Richardsons (Stourbridge),who employed a French designer and engraver, Alphonse Lechverel between 1877 -8: Thomas Webb (Stourbridge) who employed the great cameo sculptor, George Woodhall from c.1874; Stevens & Williams, (Stourbridge) who employed John Northwood as Art Director from 1882-1902.

[120] Ibid. George Woodhall's (1850 – 1925) background and training exemplifies this new category of industry trained design specialists. He began his training in John Northwood's etching workshop at the Red House Glassworks (later to become Stuart Crystal) near Stourbridge. At the same time he studied freehand and model drawing at the Stourbridge School of Art and then joined Thomas Webb as a glass engraver in 1874. In 1880 he started cameo carving for Webbs, for which his decorative design skills were in demand. Woodall and other recognised 'glass artists' of that period, occupy an interesting position in the history of design because they were famed for their tremendous mastery of handicraft decorating techniques as much if not more than their design abilities. Another example which points up this bias towards craft over design was the freelance glass engraver, Joseph Keller who brought new engraving styles to the Stourbridge industry from his native Bohemia. Keller is known to have designed and produced Japanese–inspired art glass on a freelance basis, for Stevens & Williams.

decorated by the designer's own hand and they were not designed as one-off or limited edition pieces. What Murray's designs did have in common with special lines created by artists and artist craftsmen for both Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood (and what set 'special' designs apart from the mainstream production of those firms) was the inclusions of the artist's mark or designer's signature etched on the bottom. In that specific context Murray's status as an independent professional design consultant for three companies (and two of them for seven years or more) warrants analysis and comment.

In a recent article on household advice literature, Penny Sparke discussed the professional presentation of the American author and interior designer Elsie de Wolfe, who she argued styled herself as a 'signature-designer' in the manner of the early fashion couturiers, especially Charles Frederick Worth (1825 – 1895).[121] Sparke described the presentation of de Wolfe's book, *The House in Good Taste,* (1913), with its photographic frontispiece that consisted of a portrait of the author taken by the eminent fashion photographer, Baron de Meyer signed underneath by de Wolf. She paralleled the personalised authentication of the book (and by extension of the de Wolfe interior in which the portrait was posed) with Worth's special 'signature' labels stitched into his couture dresses. Sparke argued that this represented an early form of branding that offered '…the consumers of products or services the potential for their own self-realisation and individualisation through the act of consumption.'[122] In de Wolfe's case, the association of herself and by extension her work with the rarefied world of high fashion was very important in projecting a distinctive iconic persona to her potential audience and market. The concept of the 'signature designer' that emerges is useful to understand the particular projection of the designer-as-individual onto the objects he or she has designed especially in the context of an evolving consumer culture.

Although Murray might in retrospect be perceived as a 'signature-designer' especially as his designs were marketed as 'designer ranges', it is important to note that he was not a known designer at the outset of his freelance career nor was he established in the worlds of art or

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[121] See Penny Sparke, 'The "Ideal" and the "Real" Interior in Elsie de Wolfe's *The House in Good Taste* of 1913', *Journal of Design History, 16,* No 1, 2003, pp 63 – 76

[122] Ibid p 65

fashion from which many 'signature designers' are drawn.[123] Furthermore, his writings about the role of the designer indicate that he had no perception of himself (or designers generally) as iconic thus the concept of the 'signature-designer' was not one that he consciously pursued or cultivated. [124] Indeed, although his one-man design show had potential for promoting his design skills, the exhibition brochure consisted only of a catalogue list of the exhibits with detail of manufacturer and prices. Its implicit message was that industrial arts should be treated as seriously as the fine arts. The evidence suggests that conceptualisation and projection of Murray as a 'signature-designer' was outside of his control and was constructed in the commercial process of marketing and retailing the lines he designed for the two firms.

Nevertheless it is important to consider the impact that the design revolution in which Murray played a part had on the status of 'designer goods' and their public reception. This analysis of his design career has made visible the creation, via marketing strategies, of a 'signature-designer' which reflected a new and developing conceptualisation of the industrial designer-as- icon. Looking at how the individual firms marketed their Keith Murray ranges also offers tantalising glimpses of changing perceptions about consumers who were increasingly presumed to be 'modern' in taste and outlook (and being schooled to adopt a new consumer ethos based on certain design criteria). In that respect, it is important to make a distinction between the value currently attached to 'designer' artefacts as collectibles and the material and perceptual changes to a category of consumer goods at the time they were produced and marketed. It is that latter context that demands attention for this study. Thus the final part of this chapter examines in detail how Murray's reputation as a designer for industry ranging across media was cultivated in the commercial context through the marketing strategies associated the 'designer' ranges that he produced for each firm.

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[123] Aside from the historic example of De Wolf there are more recent examples of famous designers who are commissioned to create specialist lines of domestic pottery and glass. These would include the fashion designers, John Rocha who created lead crystal table glass and home accessories for Waterford; Jasper Conran who designed similar lines in lead crystal for Stuarts and now designs ceramic ware for Wedgwood and Paul Costelloe who designs earthenware tableware for Wedgwood.

[124] By contrast an example of an industrial designer who did cultivate an iconic status was the American, Raymond Loewy. There is a famous photograph of him posing in a mock-up of a designer's office at the *Contemporary American Industrial Art Exhibition,* Metropolitan Museum, New York in 1934. Loewy, who looked and dressed like the young Clarke Gable, was also photographed on the tender of the S-1 Locomotive he restyled (or 'streamlined') for the Pennsylvania Railroad in a publicity shot c.1937 - 9. Both images are reproduced in: *The Machine Age in America 1918- 1941,* Exhibition Catalogue, Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1986, plates 3:24 and 5:22.

Part Three: Promoting the Keith Murray Glass and Ceramics Ranges

Modernist design (or at least contemporary ranges by named designers) not only presented new marketing possibilities on the home front for British companies whose export markets had collapsed in the world recession but it also demanded new marketing strategies. That was evidentially appreciated by Wedgwood's management who recognised that there was a developing home market for 'modern' goods and consequently promoted its 'designer' ranges to the public via high quality display advertising and through specially-designed in-store exhibitions, (as demonstrated in Chapter Three). Although Stevens & Williams were aware of a potential design-conscious home market, it had not cultivated the strong corporate image that Wedgwood had achieved through years of design-conscious advertising. That changed as a result of Murray's employment by the firm, which marked the initial stage of its strategy to compete for a share of the growing market for Modernist glass. Thus this final part of the chapter goes on to analyse how certain perceptions of designer products and modern lifestyles formed the basis for the promotional schemes of both firms in the 1930s.

Advertising and Promotions

Stevens & Williams was prepared to invest in the Keith Murray range to the extent of assigning a marketing budget to promote it, hiring a public relations consultant and commissioning distinctive press advertising as explained in Chapter Two. The initial launch to the trade in January 1933 was not a low key affair, indeed Murray had redesigned and modernised the firm's London showrooms for the occasion and it was heralded in the trade press with a special display advertisement that suggested a forthcoming design exhibition rather than a trade launch.[125] The design and layout of the advertisement (almost identical to that illustrated in Fig. 4:3) in itself represented a new departure for the firm because hitherto, the design of its display advertising did not manifest any engagement with principles of Modernist design. That launch was followed up in February by major exposure to the trade at the annual British Industries Fair, where the Keith Murray range had its own large display on the Stevens & Williams stand (as discussed in Chapter Two).

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[125] Stevens & Williams display advertisement in *Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review,* Jan 2 1933, p 54

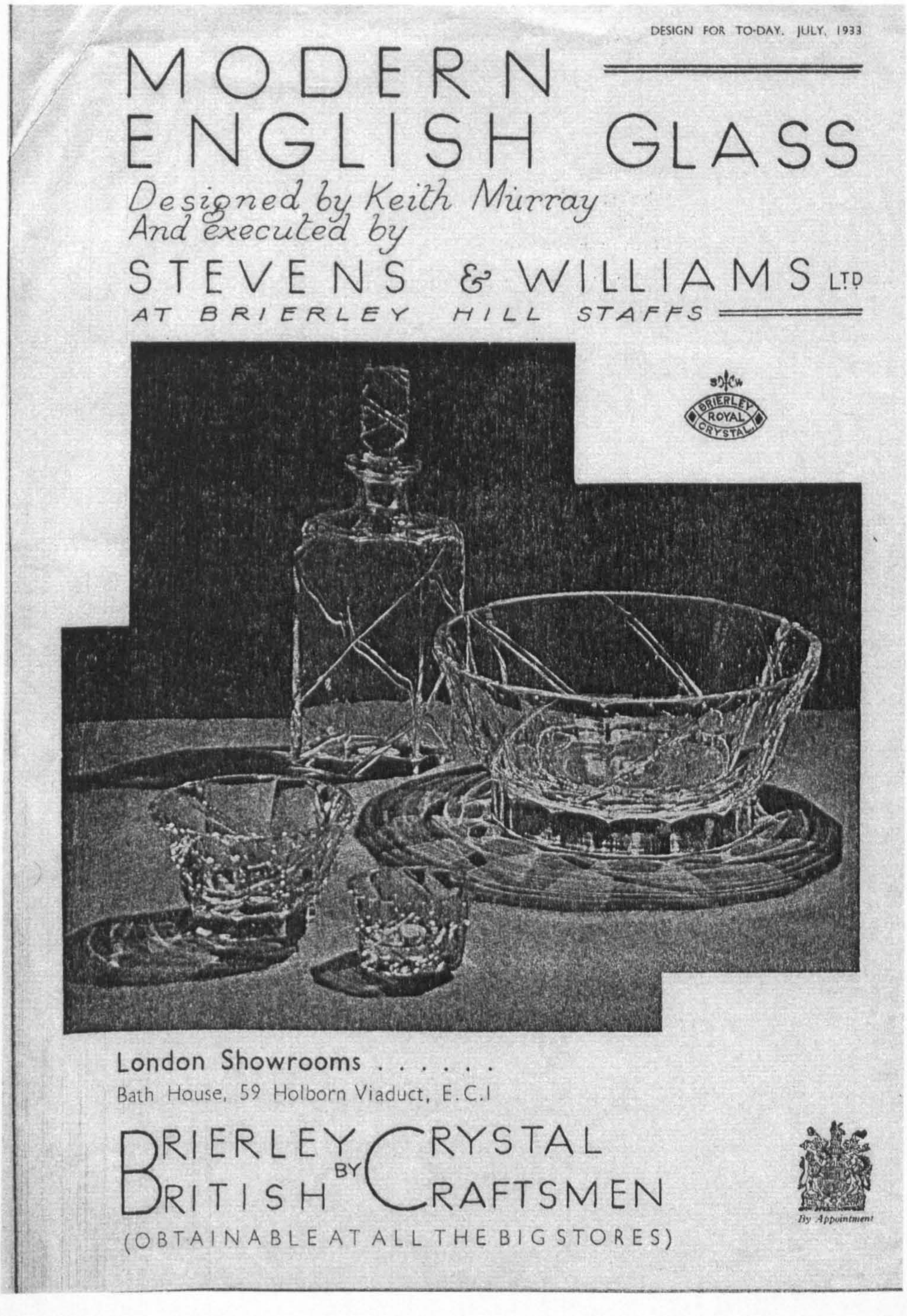

Fig 4:3

Copy of the Stevens & Williams first advertisement for its Keith Murray Glass (this version published in Design For Today, July 1933)

The display advertisements for the firm's Modernist glass were more design-conscious in terms of their design, use of typefaces and general layout as evident in this version of Stevens & William's first advertisement featuring Murray's work (see Fig 4:3). The title 'Modern English Glass' is in a sans serif typeface associated with Modernist graphic design and the subtitle '...designed by Keith Murray' was printed in a facsimile freehand script that gave the impression of the designer's signature. In respect of their Modernist aesthetic they began to look more like the design-conscious advertisements that Wedgwood were already using before Murray designed for them.[126] A crucial difference was that Wedgwood applied its distinctive Modernist style to all of its corporate advertising, whether for modern or traditional lines and for both trade and domestic publications. Stevens & Williams however, ran two styles of display ads in the trade press; one that featured the new design conscious ranges, especially the work of Murray and a more conventional type that promoted the firm's more traditional product lines, especially heavily cut crystal. It is likely that from 1933, the advertising of the firm's Modernist glass was handled by a different agency.[127]

The trade press, notably *Pottery Gazette & Glass Trades Review* (*PGGTR*) kept buyers (and competitors) up to date about new lines designed by Murray for Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood.[128] The importance of the new venture was underlined by the strategic insertion of display advertisements in *PGGTR* emphasising the connection with the designer by Stevens & Williams (as per the example shown in Fig. 4:4) and soon after by Wedgwood.[129]

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[126] Wedgwood were engaged with the design reform movement, especially the DIA in the 1920s thus they would have been exposed to campaigns to improve corporate graphics, typefaces and poster and display advertisements that were central to the DIA's programme in the inter-war period. There is a consistency about the firm's promotional material throughout the 1930s, especially in terms of its use of modern typefaces (including the Wedgwood logo itself), the use of high quality photography and the inclusion of its slogan; 'Wedgwood, a living tradition'. The strong house style and its modern aesthetic suggest that its promotional material was handled by a single agency that understood and were committed principles of modern corporate marketing.

[127] From c 1937 the firm's advertising in *PGGTR* took on a more co-ordinated format, which suggests that it became more aware of the need for corporate identity and strong brand image. Particularly noticeable was the tendency to call the products (Royal) Brierley Crystal as the trade name and to emphasise the royal warrant. The name Stevens & Williams was still included but in the context of the manufacturer as in: 'Brierley Crystal made by Stevens & Williams Ltd.'

[128] Most of the detailed reporting relating to new designs was in the reports about the various manufacturers' exhibits at the annual British Industries Fair and especially in features pertaining to royal visits to the fair (see my discussion in Chapter One).

[129] See Appendix XII for table showing details of advertisements by Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood in *PGGTR* (1933 -1940) featuring or referring to designs by Keith Murray.

Fig 4:4

Stevens & Williams advertisement for its Keith Murray Glass (this version published in Pottery Gazette & Glass Trades Review, 1935

The glass designer in promotional discourse

By the end of 1933, other traditional glass firms were advertising new and more modern lines in *PGGTR.* For example Thomas Webb & Sons Ltd. advertised a line of 'Modern Art Glass' that featured a heavy fluted vase and simple footed jug and Thomas Webb & Corbett Ltd. advertised a sherry set that was distinctly 'modern' in its line.[130] The inference here is not that they rushed out new designs to compete with Stevens & William's 'Modern English Glass' as there is evidence that several firms were already experimenting with more modern designs following on from the publication of the *Gorrell Report.*[131] The fact that some of Stevens & Williams's main competitors also adopted the sparser aesthetic associated with Modernist graphic advertising and even incorporated individual designers' names in their advertisements indicates, at the very least that those firms recognised the importance of emphasising a commitment to advancing glass design in their advertising communications.

By 1936 at least three rival firms were undoubtedly following the example of Stevens & Williams with regards to promoting new 'modern' lines by named designers as evidenced in their advertising formats. For example, by 1934 Thomas Webb were commissioning work from a freelance architect designer for their eponymous 'Modern Art Glass' range, which featured a bowl with abstract geometric intaglio decoration by one Homery Folkes, A.R.I.B.A.[132] Although Folkes was only associated with the firm for two or three years, the practice of promoting the work of individual and named designers associated with the firm continued (at least as far as its advertising was concerned). That much might have been

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[130] See *PGGTR* Dec 1933, p 1430 (ad for T Webb & Corbett) and p. 1438 (ad for Thos Webb & Sons Ltd)

[131] For example, the Stourbridge firm, Stuart Crystal were also involved in a more experimental approach to modern design when they manufactured glass designed by artists for a special exhibition at Harrods, London (1934) in conjunction with a similar experimental range designed for Foley China. This collaborative project evolved from manufacturers and retailers response to the *Gorrell Report.* It was managed by T.A. Fennemore of the Pottery firm, Brain and Co. who commissioned well known British artists and designers including Gordon Forsyth, Ludwig Kny (chief designer for Stuart & Sons Ltd.), Paul Nash, Eric Ravillious, Graham Sutherland and Laura Knight to design domestic glass and ceramics. The glass had a second public showing at the *1935 Art in Industry* exhibition but despite publicity it achieved in design circles very few of the pieces were put into production at Stuart's and of those, only one was by an outside designer (others were the work of staff designer, Ludwig Kny.). See Christine Golledge (former Archivist of Stuart Crystal) 'Stuart & Sons Ltd (1918 – 1939)' in Roger Dodsworth (ed) op cit. *British Glass Between the Wars,* pp 28 - 31

[132] Illustrated in advertisement for Thos Webb & Sons, PGGTR, Oct. 1934 p1216. Little is known about Folkes's career as a freelance designer to date. Former Technical and Works Director, Stan Eveson recalled that Homery Folkes (b 1906) was a local architect and worked for the firm from c.1933 for "a short period". His designs were advertised in PGGTR in 1934 and 1935. See Stan Eveson, 'Thomas Webb & Sons (1918 – 1939)', in Roger Dodsworth (ed) op cit. *British Glass Between the Wars,* pp 24 – 28

expected from a firm whose General Manager, Sven Fogelberg had worked for the Kosta glass factory in Sweden.[133] It may explain why Thomas Webb & Sons' advertisements confidently promoted individual designs by staff designers, Anna Fogelberg (neé Grunkvist) and Art Director, Thomas (T.F.) Pitchford in the same way that it had announced new designs by its architect-designer consultant.[134] Stuart Crystal also began to feature a designer's signature against photographs of modernistic designs in their advertisements. The designer in that case was not a freelance consultant like Murray or Folkes, but the firm's artistic director and engraver, Ludwig Kny.[135] Although Kny's designs reflected his innovative outlook, the emphasis on decoration meant that they did not have the same degree of the formal clarity and simplicity as that which characterised the work of architect-designers, Murray and Folkes.[136]

By 1936, the Birmingham firm of John Walsh Walsh Ltd. was vigorously promoting the launch of its designer range created by its newly appointed designer Clyne Farquharson. The publicity campaign for 'Clyne Farquharson Crystal' emphasised the designer's role in all aspects of its production and the fact that each piece was to be signed (or alternatively rejected) by the designer on completion.[137] Glass historian and curator, Roger Dodsworth, explains that in the original concept, certain pieces of 'Clyne Farquharson Crystal' were not only to be signed but were to be marked with an edition number. Dodsworth argues that, although the 'limited edition' idea was abandoned by the firm after 1937, the fact that it was

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[133] The attribution of manufactured items to specific designers in exhibitions and promotional material was standard practice in Sweden as an outcome of debates and discussions about the role of the artist in industry instigated by design reformers.

[134] Anna Grunkvist designed for the firm from 1932 upon her husband, Sven Fogelberg''s appointment. She brought to the firm a distinctly modern and Swedish style as epitomised in the special designs commissioned by the Rembrandt Guild. Some (if not all) of her work was signed 'Anna Fogelberg'. She returned to Sweden in the mid-1930s. T.F Pitchford (b c 1912) was a Stourbridge man, who worked as a staff designer and was made Chief Designer in 1932. He was a versatile and prolific designer, who according to Stan Eveson's account was responsible for the introduction of 8000 new lines between 1932 and the outbreak of war in 1939. See Eveson, S, op cit p27.

[135] Ludwig Kny came from a family of glass decorators, thus the family name was known and respected in the glass trade. He died in service in 1937.

[136] Kny developed a modernistic (i.e. Art Deco) style of decoration from the late 1920s onwards using intaglio cutting on new heavy forms that went against the traditions of both cut crystal and all-over copper wheel engraving.

[137] See Roger Dodsworth, 'John Walsh Walsh of Birmingham – Tradition and Innovation 1918 – 1939', *Journal of the Glass Association I,* 1985 pp 59 – 76.

initiated to any degree was an indication that manufacturers were seriously and imaginatively engaging with the concept of the designer's role.[138]

The examples described above are useful in the context of this discussion about the way that competing glass firms began to try out more modern approaches to design because it indicates that traditional West Midlands glass manufacturers were more inclined to take the lead from a rival firm than they were from hectoring design reform organisations. By 1936, Thomas Webb was proud to feature a mitre cut vase in a special advertisement in *PGGTR* with the accompanying copy: 'Acquired by the Victoria & Albert Museum for the permanent collection, this vase, designed by T. Pitchford, is only one of many beautiful pieces made for decorative and everyday use…'[139] Webb's announcement confirms that the firm engaged with key principles of design reform, especially that of acknowledging the importance of the designer's role (in this case a staff designer) in the creation of good designs suited to modern life. At the very least this analysis of trade advertising of the 1930s has indicated that Stevens & William's launch of its Modernist glass range instigated an embrace of the 'designer' (even the 'signature-designer') glass concept amongst its trade rivals as evidenced in successive advertisements in the trade press.[140]

The exhibitions as promotional tool

The importance of exhibitions for establishing Murray's standing as an important designer (and also as a stimulus for press reports on his work) was argued in Chapter One. Rival manufacturers could not have failed to notice that Stevens & Williams and Wedgwood were the recipients of free publicity that followed on from press reports about Murray's designs throughout the 1930s. One of the earliest of these was in connection with an exhibition of British design in Copenhagen in 1932 for which Murray was awarded a gold medal for a glass bowl made by Stevens & Williams.[141] Thus he began to receive public recognition as a

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[138] Ibid pp 67 -72

[139] *PGGTR*, Feb 1936, p 232

[140] See table analysing incidence and content of Modernist-style advertisements for domestic glass in *PGGTR* (1933 – 1940) Appendix XI

[141] Murray's work exhibited at the exhibition was discussed and illustrated in *The Times*, 26 Sept. 1932, p 16.

designer of note and especially for his contribution to glass design from 1932 onwards (that was even before the official trade launch of the Keith Murray glass).[142] In 1933 and 1935 the two most ambitious national exhibitions of design of the decade took place and their role in establishing Murray's reputation as a designer of note working across a range of media has already been discussed.[143]

Stevens & Williams were remarkably successful in getting work selected for both exhibitions and in drawing positive comments and reviews of its Modernist glass (needless to say, the majority of it was designed by Murray).[144] Many provincial manufacturers found exhibitions promoting design reform stressful because items for display had to be submitted for selection by design rather than trade specialists. Given the quantity of Keith Murray glass (some 52 pieces) on display at the DIA-sponsored *British Art in Relation to the Home* design exhibition of 1934, it is evident that the selection panel were delighted with Stevens & Williams' new venture. It was interpreted in the design press as a new direction for the firm.[145] The firm's subsequent success in getting its glass selected for display at the *1935 Art & Industry* exhibition confirmed its position in the vanguard of modern British glass. At that exhibition

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[142] Given that the earliest of these started to appear in 1932 (and the range was launched to the trade in Jan 1933) it is clear that a concerted publicity campaign was in place as soon as Murray was appointed.

[143] *1933 British Art in Industry,* Dorland Hall, London and *1935 Art in Industry,* Burlington House, London. During 1933 (the launch year for his glass and ceramics ranges) Murray's designs were frequently illustrated in journals such as *Design for Today* and *The Studio* journals as his work reached a wider public following the *British Art in Industry* exhibition. Design was increasingly on the agenda in the intellectual sector of the media as evidenced by *The Listener*'s review of the exhibition which included a photograph of cut glass bowls by Murray, see Christopher Hussey, 'Industry & Art: a Pioneer Exhibition', *Listener, IX,* 21 June, 1933, pp 967-969

[144] I am not implying that Wedgwood were less successful with their Keith Murray designs because that was not the case. Wedgwood had a total of 28 exhibits (mostly sets and not single items as in the glass section) in the 1933 exhibition. Of that total, only two were of Keith Murray designs (two matt glazed bowls and a beer mug and jug). Of the rest of the exhibits, the biggest majority was the work of staff designers, John Godwin and Millicent Taplin. There were three exhibits of tableware patterns by the freelance designer, L.H. Bucknell, two sets of animal figures by the sculptor John Skeaping and one tableware pattern by Harry Trethowan, who was employed as the buyer of glass and ceramics for Heal & Son Ltd, but did occasional freelance design. The point is that Wedgwood were already in good standing with design reformers and were generally understood to be embracing principles of good modern design, whereas Stevens & Williams were not associated with progressive design before their success with the Keith Murray range. Thus their success on the national stage was more remarkable.

[145] I quoted earlier in this chapter C.G. Holme's (editor of the *The Studio*) congratulating Stevens & Williams on finding a designer of Murray's sensibility.

44 pieces by Murray were on display and Stevens & Williams were one of only five manufacturers whose glass was considered sufficiently modern to be selected.[146]

All three firms for whom Murray worked enjoyed free publicity in the print media because examples of his work in ceramics and glass were frequently discussed and/or illustrated in design and lifestyle journals and occasionally in the broadsheet press.[147] Most typically, items were illustrated in 'News of New Designs' – style features that exemplified the best new work or special seasonal promotions. Such was the public perception of Stevens & Williams that when Pevsner was researching the glass industry for his study, *Enquiry* he described Stevens & Williams as one of '...only two firms (that) had done serious and persevering work in introducing good modern design...' [148]

Selling the 'designer' concept to consumers via special promotional publications

Stevens & Williams's financial commitment to promoting its Keith Murray glass is indicated by its outlay in printing an illustrated promotional brochure entitled *Modern English Glass* probably to support the launch of the range.[149] The *Modern English Glass* brochure ran to ten pages and included a brief overview of the firm's venture into modern glass and its collaboration with '...a London architect, Mr Keith Murray' who '...understands the English tradition and also understands the modern movement in design.'[150] Although that level of promotional activity does not seem extraordinary by today's standards it should be

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[146] The exhibition also featured 21 of Murray's designs for Wedgwood and 14 designs in silver or silver plate for Mappin & Webb.

[147] The principal journals featuring Keith Murray's designs in glass in the 1930s were: *The Studio,(and the Studio Yearbook of the Decorative Arts); Design for Today; Art and Design; Ideal Home* and *Architectural Review*. The innovative work of Keith Murray was mentioned in a piece on changes in the British glass industry by W.E.S. Turner (President of the Society of Glass Technologists) see review by W.E.S.Turner, 'Glassware' *The Times,* 1 Nov. 1932, p xxvii. Lifestyle sections of the broadsheet press featured new designs as in, for example an article by an unnamed correspondent, which mentioned Keith Murray in connection with the trend for artists to work in collaboration with manufacturers arising out of the '...demand for sound design'. See 'The Charm of Modern Table Glass', *The Times,* Wednesday Jan 12, 1938, p15

[148] Nikolaus Pevsner op cit p 84

[149] *Modern English Glass,* c 1933. My copy of the brochure came from the Royal Brierley Crystal factory museum and archive.

[149] Ibid p 2.

[150] Ibid p 2.

remembered that the firm was still in dire straits following the disastrous slump of 1932 when it was operating on a two-day week basis.

A major emphasis in both the introductory text and captions to the illustrations was on locating Murray's Modernist work as a continuation of the Georgian tradition in fine crystal glass making. It summarised the objectives of this designer/manufacturer collaboration as '...to proceed from the point of glass design where Georgian ideas were replaced by the ornamental profusion (and confusion) of Victorian taste and so create designs, which would accord with contemporary canons of form and decoration.'[151] The illustrations consist of seven black and white photographs of individual bowls or dishes and decanters with a single glass. The accompanying captions tended to emphasise the clarity of the crystal and quality of decoration with the occasional reference to the restraint of the design. For example the caption for a flower vase reads: 'A heavy, plain fluted vase with slight cutting on the edge. Another instance of the decorative power of simple facets.'[152] Both the formal quality of the photography and the graphic layout of the pages indicated that the graphic designer was engaged with modern European-inspired approaches typographical design as advocated by the DIA.[153] Some of these high quality publicity shots appeared as illustrations in journal articles or were featured later in the firm's advertising which gives some indication of a coordinated publicity campaign.[154]

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[151] Ibid p11

[152] Ibid p 9

[153] In the 1930s the DIA ran a campaign to improve the standard of graphic display advertisements which aimed to bring the standards of commercial graphics up to that of well-designed journals and periodicals. Key criteria (based on Modernist principals) were formal clarity, consistency of typefaces, unfussy and well-proportioned layout and clear illustrations or photographs in keeping with the style of the advertisement.

The influence of that campaign is evident in a preface to an architectural exhibition catalogue that featured 50 display advertisements designed according to a set of rules. This experimental venture aimed to achieve '...some measure of dignity and homogeneity' by limiting the choice of typefaces to five, limiting the size of print and excluding name blocks and trademarks. Of the 50 contributors several, including Duncan Miller Ltd., Edinburgh Weavers, Heal & Son Ltd., Stevens & Williams Ltd., Troughton & Young Ltd., and Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. were members of the DIA and were actively engaged with applying principals of design reform to their products or stock ranges. Stevens & William's advertisement featured a photograph of a modern decanter and glasses designed by Keith Murray and its copy extolled the merits of the range: "Critics have held that it is as fine as anything which is being made in glass anywhere in the world." See 'These Advertisements', *International Architecture 1924 – 1934,* Catalogue to the Centenary exhibition of the Royal Institute of British Architects, pp i – xxviii.

[154] For example the photograph with the caption 'A thin bowl engraved with a flower pattern. An example of reticent decoration', was also published in *Decorative Art*, 1933 (op cit).

In order to emphasise to the glass-buying public the connection between the designer's name and Stevens & Williams (and later Royal Brierley Crystal) the firm held special in-store exhibitions of the Keith Murray glass, the first of which was held at Barrows Stores, Birmingham in 1933.[155] Stevens & Williams signalled the importance of promoting its new venture to the public (as opposed to the trade) by investing in a further illustrated brochure similar in style and format to the first one. Its introductory address contextualised Murray's modern designs as a continuum of British (i.e. 18th century English and Irish lead crystal) glass making rather than a rupture with the past. It cited the 'wise use of traditional methods' employed by Murray as a designer '…who has given many years to the collection and study of old English glass'.[156]

The promotional activity undertaken by Stevens & Williams for their new venture into 'designer' glass was paralleled by Wedgwood, who also organised special in-store exhibitions to promote the new lines by Keith Murray. Indeed the first public launch at the John Lewis department store in London, the *Exhibition of New Wedgwood Shapes Designed by Keith Murray*, 1933 had its own illustrated promotional booklet. That was followed by an in-store exhibition at Barrows Stores, Birmingham in 1934 (following the exhibition of Keith Murray glass).[157] Throughout the 1930s, Wedgwood's advertising emphasised the concept of contemporary design as a 'Living Tradition' and signified the importance of individual designers, artists and sculptors to that tradition. The display advertisements and promotional publications featuring Murray's designs indicate that he became, for a while, the epitome of that tradition in Wedgwood's eyes. There is one particular photograph that was used for a range of publicity purposes that perfectly captured the concept of 'signature-designer' when

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[155] Stevens & Williams also used the trade name 'Royal Brierley' and later 'Royal Brierley Crystal' in its advertising in the 1930s. This was common practice for glass houses as with the firm of James Powell and Sons who also went under the trade name of 'Whitefriars Glass'. The display advertisements for Stevens and Williams indicate that the firm began to call its products 'Royal Brierley Crystal' on a more consistent basis from about 1937. That change coincided with a more consistent and professional style to its display advertising that employed quality photography and a distinct format for layout from that time.

[156] *Exhibition of Glass Designed by Keith Murray for Steven & Williams of Stourbridge,* (ex catalogue), Barrow Stores Ltd., Corporation Street, Birmingham, March 16 –28th 1933. A copy of the catalogue is held in the Victoria & Albert Museum's Dept of Ceramics and Glass 'Keith Murray' file.

[157] Barrow Stores was establishing its own reputation as a design-conscious store through its hosting of a DIA exhibition, *Design for the Home* in 1933.

it was printed with the Keith Murray's signature at the bottom of the image.[158] (See Fig. 4:5 & Fig.4:6)

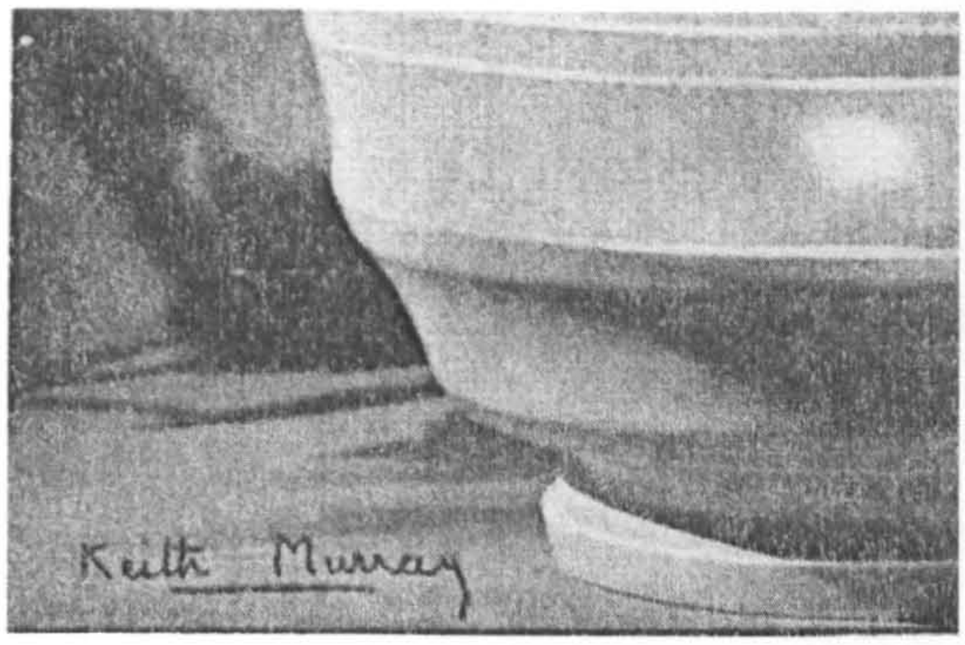

Fig. 4:5 *Close up of vase illustrated in Fig 4:6 showing designer's signature*

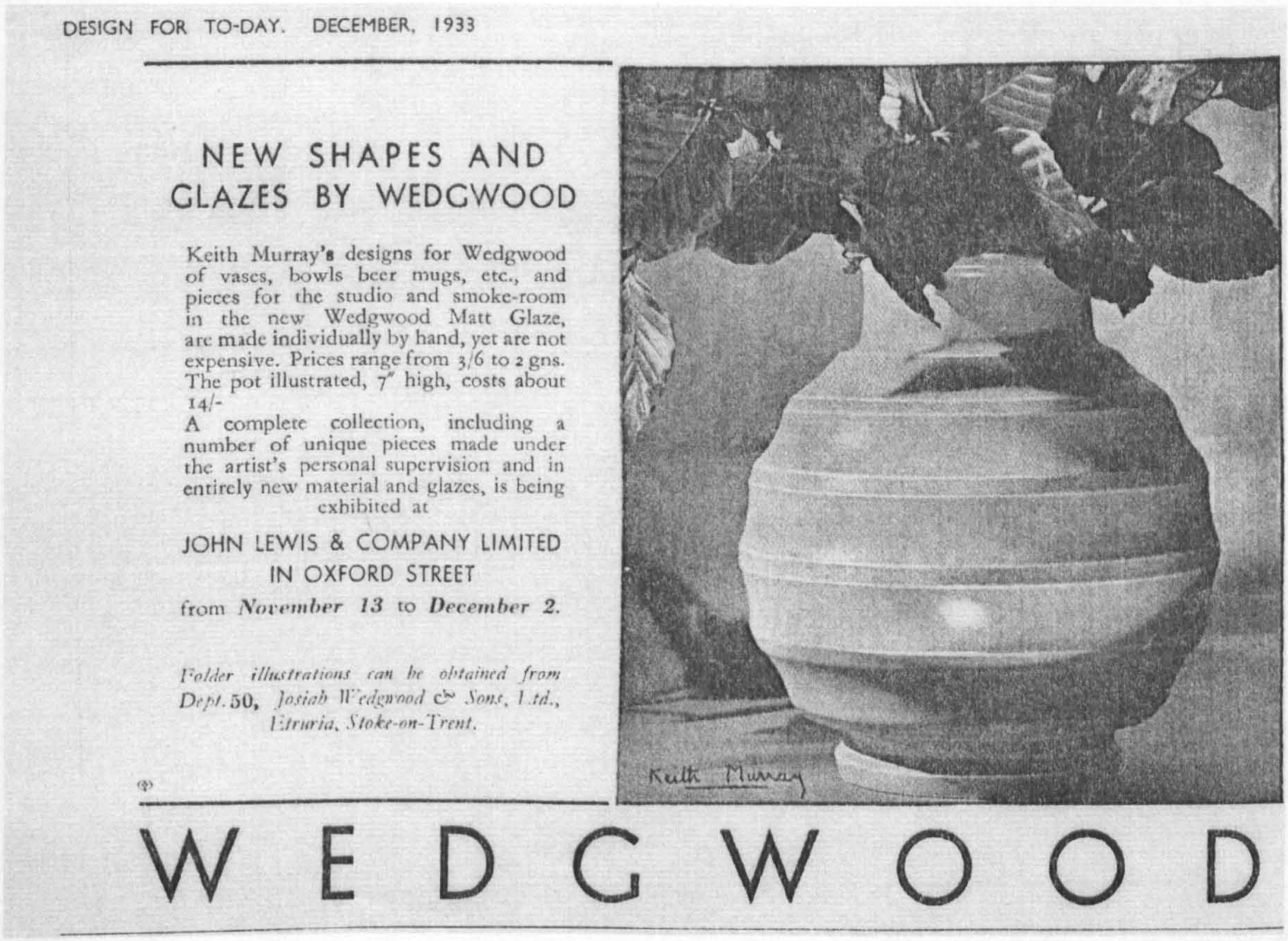

Fig. 4:6

Advertisement from Design for Today, 1933 showing Keith Murray vase no 3765

[158] It was first used to advertise the *New Wedgwood Shapes Designed by Keith Murray*, exhibition at the John Lewis store in *Design for Today,* Dec 1933 p iv.

The same photograph was also used on the front cover of a Wedgwood promotional brochure, titled *Designs by Keith Murray.*[159] In that context, the carefully framed black and white image of a Modernist vase with its very contemporary arrangement of foliage and 'signed' by the designer imparts a particular meaning to the ornamental ware by the same designer in the rest of the brochure.

Wedgwood's recognition of Murray's achievements in terms of the firm's ethos of innovation was underlined in the introductory passage of a later brochure *Designs by Keith Murray and Animal Figures by John R. Skeaping in Wedgwood,* (c. 1935). It commented on Murray's critical success at the *1935 Art in Industry* exhibition:

> 'The largest number of designs accepted from any single firm. Mr. Herbert Read, broadcasting on this exhibition, said: "Josiah Wedgwood & Sons still lead, as they have led the world for 150 years, in the design of ordinary table ware. Some of their new departures – for example, the Beer Mugs designed by Keith Murray – are better than anything else in modern English ceramics...' [160]

In that brochure (of which there were at least two versions) Murray's designs, whether ornamental or useful were shown alongside sculptured animal figures by the well-known British artist and sculptor. (See front cover illustrated in Chapter Three, Fig 3.3).[161] The visual presentation and the copy demonstrate how the concept of 'signature-designer' artefacts was developed into that of lifestyle-accessory. All of the designs are in a Modernist idiom and they are presented in a similar range of bodies and glazes that gave the two lines a visual cohesion. The captions indicate that they were available in a small number of harmonious colours and bodies (principally Cream or Champagne coloured earthenware, Black or Bronze basalt, or Green, Straw, Grey or White 'Matt' glazed earthenware) in order

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[159] The date of this brochure is unknown but its contents (mainly thrown and turned vases and bowls and all offered in a range of matt glaze colours) suggest c 1934. Wedgwood Museum, Barlaston, Staffs. The same photograph was used again but more severely cropped and without the signature in a further promotional brochure discussed below.

[160] Wedgwood promotional brochure (both versions) titled: *Designs by Keith Murray and Animal Figures by John R. Skeaping in Wedgwood,* c. 1935. Wedgwood Museum.

[161] There are at least two versions of that brochure, one in the Wedgwood Museum and another that I was shown and allowed to copy by a book dealer specialising in the decorative arts. Neither are dated but they have the same back cover listing Wedgwood's achievements in national and international museums, the last being the 'Royal Academy Exhibition 1935'. They contain a very similar set of illustrations and neither refer to the two-toned ware designed by Murray introduced in 1937. They therefore date between 1935 and 1936.

to underline that these were coordinated ranges. Furthermore, although they were clearly photographed in a studio they are set out in groups on polished wooden surfaces and are composed and lit to represent scenes from the modern home. That impression is heightened by the careful arrangement of flowers, foliage and fruit to give the impression of a sophisticated yet informal interior design as represented in the page from the brochure shown in Fig. 4:7

• The study table is well served by these virile and serviceable designs. The Moonstone Book-Ends (*3943*) with their architectural simplicity, are thoroughly utilitarian. So are the Moonstone Inkstand (*3874*) and the matt-green Tobacco Jar (*3867*). The "bamboo" table-lamp on the right (*3956*) is in Moonstone, and the tall vase on the extreme left (*3877*) is in Bronze Basalt. All these articles have the clean-cut turned outline that is the unmistakable stamp of Keith Murray's work in pottery.

3943 *3874* *3867* *3956*
with Parchment Shade *3877*

Fig. 4:7

Page from Wedgwood sales brochure promoting designs by Keith Murray and the sculptor, John Skeaping, c.1936

Taken together they constitute a (Modernist) ensemble of 'designer' artefacts from which the consumer could select and personalise the home. It is also implicit in the 'chatty' and informative tone of the captions to the illustrations. For example: 'This tall vase (*3805*) has personality. It can dominate its setting, or become an unobtrusive essential to a well-planned room. It is also admirable as a lamp holder. *3805 ... (in Green, Straw or Moonstone).*'[162]

The later version of the brochure flagged the introduction of additional ranges by Keith Murray. The expanded range was shown to include '...An Entirely New Bathroom Set'. The next page showed the same design applied to a tobacco jar, candlestick, inkstand, ash tray and cigarette box captioned 'These Charming New Designs Will Be a Delightful Addition to the Equipment of the Library, and Writing Table'. It also featured several pages of shape drawings (reduced to one fifth actual size for the catalogue) of Murray's designs as they appeared in the firm's design books, (see Chapter Three, Fig. 3:9 for an illustrated example). Thus Wedgwood's presentation of Keith Murray to retail customers increasingly framed his designs in terms of the concepts of evolving 'designer' ranges and of coordinated home accessories rather than art ware.

The same tendencies can be seen in the promotional material that Stevens & Williams commissioned to promote its 'modern' glass. It produced a comprehensive promotional brochure for its modern glass range titled *Brierley Crystal,* probably to coincide with the *1935 Art in Industry* exhibition and also for distribution at Murray's own exhibition in 1935.[163] It confirms that the firm was not only serious about promoting its new modern line but was also willing to commission high quality graphic and photographic material in keeping

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[162] Ibid (cited in both brochures). However one brochure also states that the vase was available in a grey glaze, which suggests that it is slightly earlier than the version in the Wedgwood Museum as the range and availability of the matt glazes was restricted from the mid 1930s. Indeed that brochure could date as late as 1936 because it also featured two new lines: a slip cast bathroom set and a writing table set. These designs are registered in the firm's modelling book (i.e they were new shapes) in November 1935. They are featured in the firm's trade advertising in 1936 as new extensions to the Keith Murray range. (*PGGTR,* Sept 1936, p1237)

[163] My suggestion that this was intended as an all-purpose promotional brochure is borne out in a photographic illustration of an in-store exhibition in *PGGTR.* The photograph shows details of glass displays featured in a commercial exhibition, 'Style in the Home' organised at Lewis's store in Manchester. Just discernible in the

with Modernist glass design and to the tastes of a more design-conscious clientele.[164] The design and layout of the brochure was in the form of a folder with loose pages inside. The folder was bold and modern in black with a line drawing of a Keith Murray decanter and wine glass in white rendering on the front, (see Fig. 4: 8). The pages inside had high quality black and white photographs of key pieces accompanied by graphic illustrations showing miniature versions of the designer's working drawings, which emphasised the theme of industrial design. (See further pages illustrated in Fig. 4:9 and Figs. 2:3 & 2:4 in Chapter Two.)

Despite its Modernist aesthetic a closer examination suggests that there was a resistance from the Stevens & Williams management to associating the range too emphatically with the name of one designer.[165] That is indicated, not only in the lack of reference to Keith Murray on its cover but also in its introductory address which hinted at some uneasiness the firm may have felt as a result of the wide and positive publicity that Murray's designs had attracted in the design press. It opened with the statement:

> 'The new English glass associated with the name of Keith Murray and Stevens & Williams has been hailed as a distinct departure. It is in fact nothing of the kind. It is a rekindling of a long tradition which had become more than a little dim.'[166]

That ambivalence to Murray's success as a named designer intimated by such details undermined what might otherwise be perceived as a confident and sophisticated marketing strategy addressed to the modern consumer. Key to that strategy was the naming of the designer on each page of examples and especially to the thematic division of items as indicated in the picture titles. Individual pages of illustrations were devoted to coordinated ranges within the Keith Murray glass such as heavy coloured and cut glass bowls and vases, bathroom and dressing table sets, modern sherry, whiskey and cocktail sets.

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display of glass by Keith Murray is a copy of the Brierley Crystal brochure with its distinctive black and white cover. See 'Style in the Home', *PGGTR*, May 1 1935, p 615

[164] My copy of that folder is by the kind permission of museum curator, Roger Dodsworh of the Broadfield House Glass Museum, Kinswinford, West Midlands who has it in his personal collection. I saw it originally at the Royal Brierley Crystal museum but its collection has since been dispersed.

[165] Nine of its 10 pages of designs featured Murray's work. The exception being a page of five designs for '...vases in crystal and crystal and black' designed by the firm's managing director, Hubert Williams-Thomas. Of those five vases only one (design no 64504) had the formal quality consistent with Murray's work

[166] Ibid – Introductory copy (no page ref).

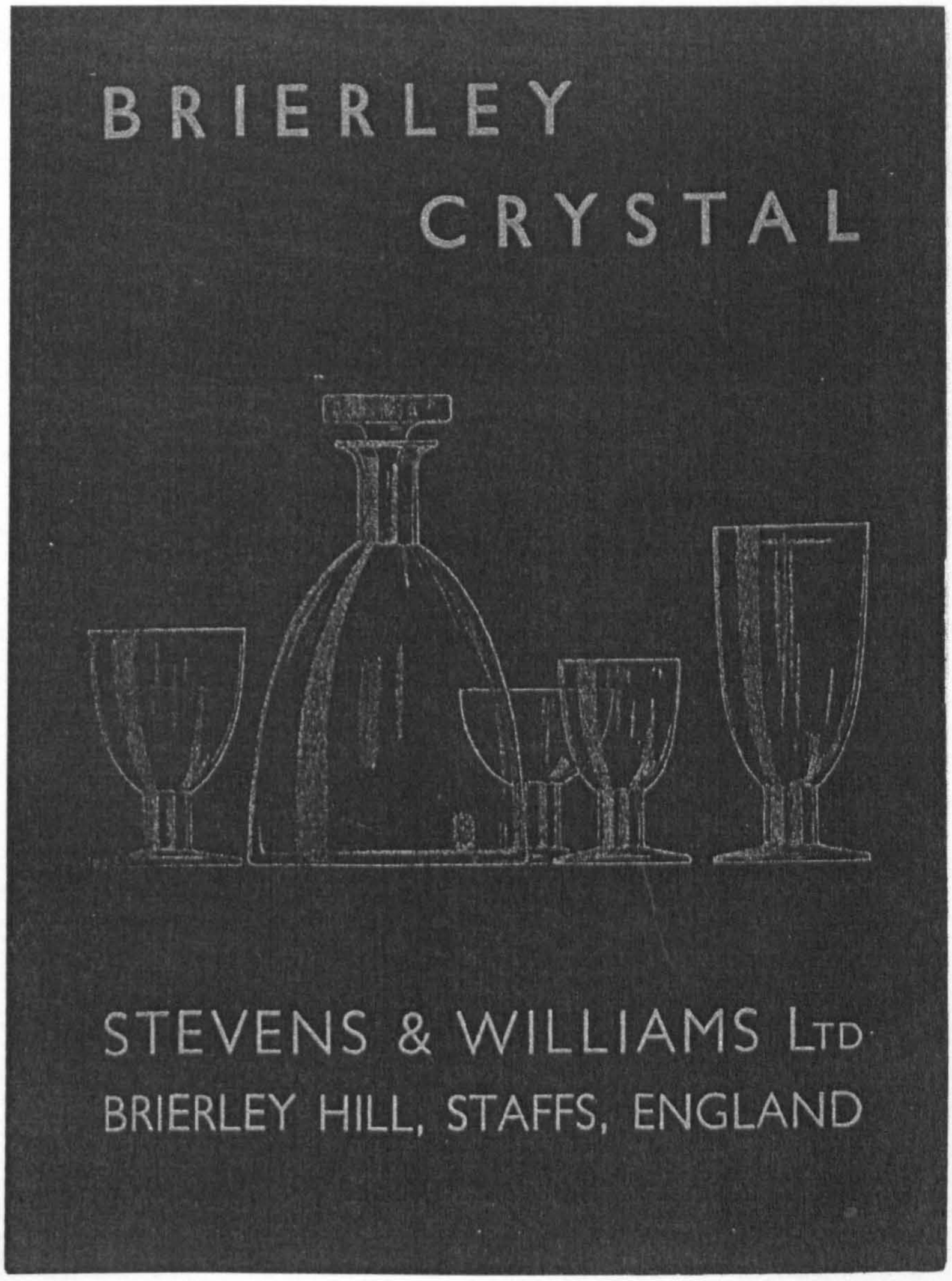

Fig. 4: 8

Stevens & Williams' promotional brochure featuring Keith Murray's Modernist glass designs, c.1935.

That detail is important to note because it shows a distinct emphasis on specific lifestyle settings and importantly a shift away from Victorian concepts of the large cut crystal table services bought to last a lifetime and of fine artistic ornamental wares that would become family heirlooms or museum pieces. Thus, through such design-oriented promotional material the consumer was invited to consider buying a co-ordinated set of glassware for the living room comprising perhaps of a bowl for cocktail nuts, a vase for cut flowers and a matching heavy glass ash tray. Alternatively they could consider a new sherry or cocktail set

to indulge in more modern and less formal socialising at home. Women might be persuaded to purchase a matching set of colour co-ordinated jars and bottles to give a luxurious and modern touch to their bathroom or dressing table.

The thumbnail design profiles and the listing of prices reminded the reader that the designer concept was not about one-of-a-kind artistry but about consumer choice from modern co-ordinated ranges. That observation might have been overlooked were it not for the fact that Wedgwood also started to include miniaturised shape drawings of Keith Murray designs in their promotional brochures. So both firms not only promoted a modern approach to living in which the designed object became a lifestyle accessory but also signalled the fact that the new ranges were created on the drawing board by a professional designer.

With regard to the *Brierley Crystal* brochure a connection was made between the new 'designer' concept and retail prices as all the items, design numbers and prices were listed, (see Fig. 4:10). Prices for Keith Murray glass featured in it ranged from plain sherry glasses in crystal (design number 318A) at 32s per dozen (i.e. about 14p per individual glass) at the low end to 84s (or £4.20) for a globular cut crystal vase (design number 472A).[167] The most expensive price cited was 180s. (£9.00) for a dozen fluted glass goblets with solid fluted feet (design number 355A). The good news for the younger or less affluent customer was that individual pieces could be bought for as little as 4s (20p) for a small nut bowl in plain bottle green glass (design no 414A), so the concept of the designer accessory also had a democratic appeal.[168]

Nevertheless, whilst the prices advertised in the brochure were not at the lowest end of the retail price range for domestic glass (and some were nearer to the top of that price range) its Modernist ranges did include less expensive items. Evidently its proposition was that individual items might be selected from a broad price range to suit individual pockets. For example in the new coordinating bathroom ranges prices started at 10s (50p) for a small perfume bottle threaded with blue, black or green glass (design numbers 367A and 368A) to

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[167] With regard to the broad band of prices that the Keith Murray range encompassed, it should be noted that the lower price items were still considerably more expensive than the 'sixpenny wineglasses from Woolworth's' (i.e 2.5p per glass).

[168] That the aspect of price was not understated in promotional literature may have followed on from the practice of displaying the prices of well-designed goods in didactic exhibitions, to communicate the message that good design need not be expensive.

21s (£1.05) for a large lidded powder bowl in violet glass with an optic wave (design number 435A). That seems a minor point but given that British firms, at that time of world recession were trying to shape an appeal to the home market, many of whom were buying their own houses with repayment mortgages and furnishing them via consumer credit; the proposition that one might buy items for the home on an incremental basis was clearly an attractive one.[169]

Fig. 4:9

Page from Stevens & Williams' promotional brochure showing Murray's Modernist interpretation of cut glass designs c.1935. Note that shape drawings are shown as well as photographic illustrations.

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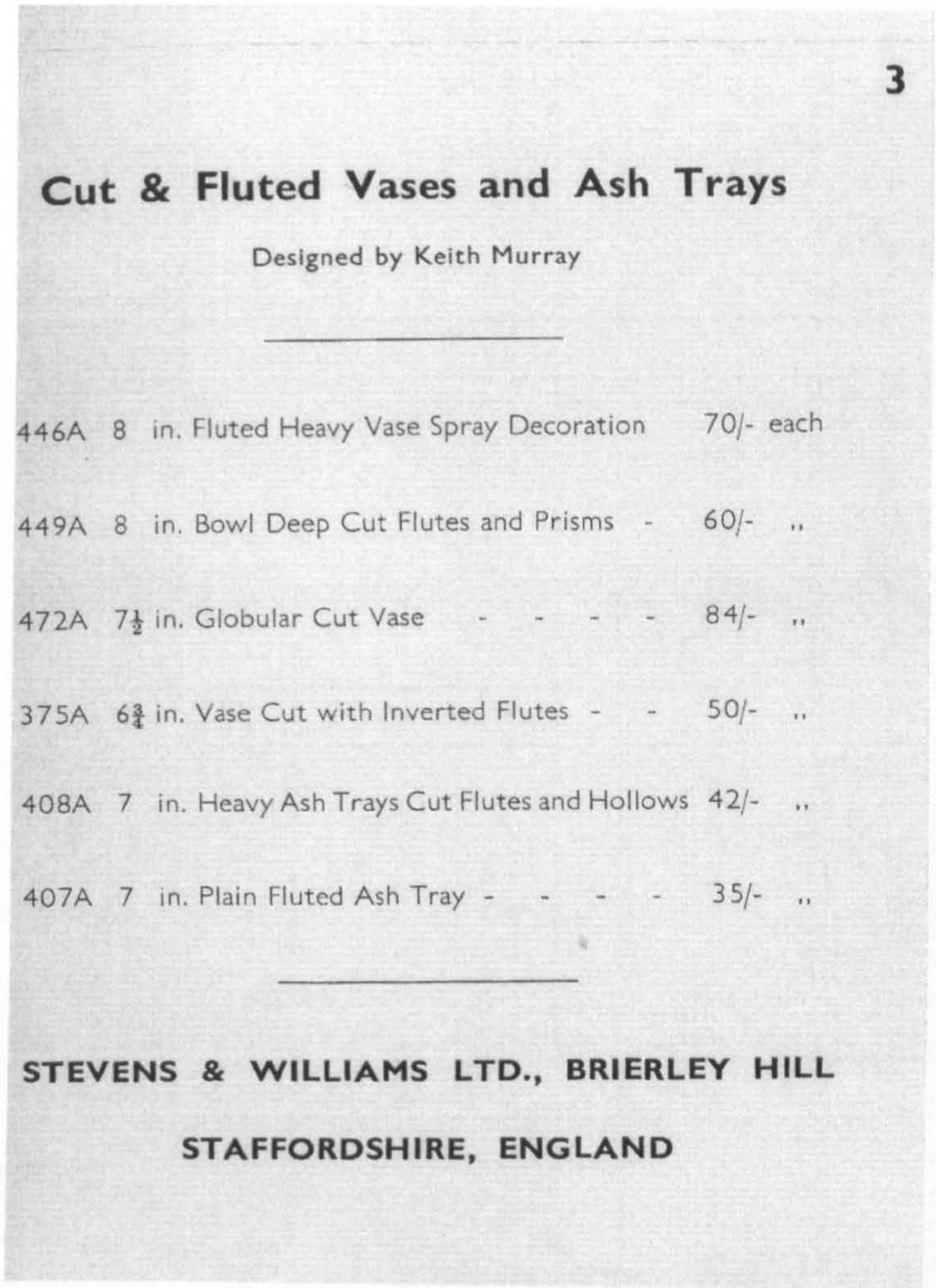
[169] Unfortunately there is a lack of evidence about the market for Keith Murray glass and ceramics or why they bought it, although we do know that it was sold mostly in stores in London and the Home Counties, such as Heal & Son Ltd, Dunns of Bromley and Fortnum & Mason. That is, in the South and South East which was most affected by suburban growth and the boom in house building



3

Cut & Fluted Vases and Ash Trays

Designed by Keith Murray

446A 8 in. Fluted Heavy Vase Spray Decoration 70/- each

449A 8 in. Bowl Deep Cut Flutes and Prisms - 60/- ,,

472A 7½ in. Globular Cut Vase - - - - 84/- ,,

375A 6¾ in. Vase Cut with Inverted Flutes - - 50/- ,,

408A 7 in. Heavy Ash Trays Cut Flutes and Hollows 42/- ,,

407A 7 in. Plain Fluted Ash Tray - - - - 35/- ,,

STEVENS & WILLIAMS LTD., BRIERLEY HILL

STAFFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

Fig. 4:10

Page from Stevens & Williams' promotional brochure showing the prices of Murray's designs featured in Fig. 4:9

The difference between conventional sales catalogues and the new retail-oriented brochures promoting Keith Murray glass and ceramics was that the latter type not only promoted the concept of coordinated ensembles but also emphasised the 'designer' concept as the prime focus of the Modernist ensemble. They implicitly fostered a type of brand loyalty because consumers could plan and acquire over time individualised ensembles of ornaments and useful items for the home by noting the price and catalogue number of items included in those brochures.

Shaping the constituents of a 'designer' range

The 1935 promotional brochure presented Stevens & Williams's Modern glass as comprising of distinct co-ordinated 'designer' ranges offering the consumer personal choice based on individual needs and budgets. In that respect it could be argued that it inscribed a set of consumption ethics based upon principles of Modernist design. I am arguing that co-ordination as a design concept in the Keith Murray Glass range had three particular facets: i) a reasonable variety of matching objects that would constitute a coherent range for a specific room or purpose (for example toilet sets, living room accessories and drinking sets as discussed above); ii) consistency of design details for certain lines (for example heavy coloured glass with deep geometrical cutting), and iii) limited colour range consistent for all the items within a line (for example choice of clear crystal with contrasting stoppers and threaded details in either black, blue or bottle green glass).

In respect of those points the Keith Murray glass range, as presented in the *Brierley Crystal* promotional brochure, started to look more like the small and specialised 'designer' ranges that we are familiar with today. However the impression of a small coordinated range belies the fact the Keith Murray range was much bigger and continued to grow as around 150 new designs were added to the factory shape book every year up until 1939. There was therefore a mismatch between the designer concept as conveyed through its publicity material and its more conventional management of Murray so as to produce large numbers of new designs on an annual basis. That convention was presumably impelled by the long-standing practice in decorative arts manufacturing of offering broad variety and lots of novelty lines that retailers could select from at trade shows and sales displays.[170] That was not so much the case with Wedgwood where, as argued in Chapter Three, there was a more collaborative approach to design, even when the designer was freelance. In that case, when Murray was involved in designing new lines, or even extension to lines, it would seem that he worked on them as individual projects and that they were conceived as discrete ranges, as evidenced by the two pages devoted to two new (but coordinating) lines of home accessories discussed earlier. In respect of that discussion it is arguable that the 'designer' and 'lifestyle' concepts purveyed

[170] That discrepancy possibly explains Murray's outspoken comments about the pressure upon the designer for industry (i.e himself) to make numbers of designs for decoration, especially cutting and engraving, in order to keep the workshops busy. See the first section of this chapter for that discussion.

through Wedgwood's publicity material genuinely reflected the development of a new category of consumer goods whereas at Stevens & Williams they concealed the firm's conservative attitude to design and manufacture.

In support of that argument it has already been suggested that Stevens & Williams were reticent about proclaiming Keith Murray's origination of its Modernist glass range too emphatically. Elsewhere in the brochure the copy was cautionary in tone especially concerning the use of coloured metal throughout the modern range…

> '…not only in transparent tints of bottle green, amber and blue but also in the use of black, or green for stems, stoppers, or for whole pieces. We think it will be conceded that such a departure is justified by the results, provided the colour is used with due discretion.'

So although it commended Murray's subtle use of colour because it was in keeping with both the Modernist idiom and with the character of restraint associated with traditional (i.e. Georgian) lead crystal it also discreetly inferred that Murray's use of colour was different to that associated with the garish decorative patterns of commercial modernistic styling.

Paradoxically, whilst the tone of some of its copy hints at the firm's anxieties about public misconceptions of what from Stevens & William's perspective was an experimental venture (rather than a wholesale rupture from its past styles and traditions) other aspects of its promotional message was much more positively inflected. Indeed, its fundamental address, as shaped by its publicity agents, seems to have been oriented towards inculcating certain design ethics in the modern consumer, especially regarding colour ensembles and co-ordinated design.

Addressing the Modern Consumer

Roland Marchand argued that advertisers in the Unites States played a major part in both shaping and promulgating a set of consumption ethics that marked the take-up of modern principals and values which constituted the 'American dream'. One aspect of his study looked particularly at the new phenomenon of coloured graphic advertisements that agencies increasingly favoured from the 1920s onwards. His analysis of that particular genre of

advertisements focussed on the kind of propositions that advertisers made to housewives (as principal consumer) relating to the availability of colour choice for an increasing range of household and personal products.[171] Whilst there were very few instances of colour being used for print advertisements on the British scene at that time, nonetheless, the same trend to stimulate consumer interest through offering colour co-ordinated ranges is apparent in the way that Stevens & Williams (or their agents) designed the public promotional literature for the Keith Murray glass.[172]

That trend towards a coordinated approach to the design and presentation of domestic merchandise was more consciously pursued in the United States as evident in the example of the American industrial designer, Russel Wright (1904 – 1976). Wright not only designed ceramic and plastic tableware, glass, aluminium kitchen ware, wooden accessories and furniture in a modernist idiom but he also retailed to the public in his shop *Russel Wright* in New York.[173] Wright's work was barely known in Britain in the 1930s so it is unlikely that he

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[171] Roland Marchand, op cit. *Advertising the American Dream...* See Ch. 5 'The Consumption Ethic: Strategies of Art & Style', pp 117 – 163. Marchand explained that the trend to purchase coloured products to harmonise with fashion and interior schemes was started in the 1920s by linen companies who wished to stimulate the purchase of towels and bedding by offering matching sets in colour-coordinated ranges. Such a strategy, he argued, encouraged consumers who previously would have bought only white goods on the basis of price and quality to take on a new set of purchasing criteria based upon fashion and style, which he called 'consumption ethics'. Customers who were thus persuaded that colour coordination in the home was chic and modern would be more likely to make purchases out of dissatisfaction with existing products rather than because of wear and tear and would consequently make more frequent purchases. They would also be inclined to favour leading (and advertised) brands associated with such modern trends where previously they may have been loyal to a particular and trusted store which sold quality staple goods. Thus new consumer concepts such as branding, brand awareness and brand loyalty were shaped through such marketing strategies. Marchand showed how that approach was applied to a broad range of manufactured goods from personal items such as a colour coordinated ladies' camera to otherwise utilitarian household appliances such as a heating furnace as evidenced in display advertisements featured in popular journals and newspapers of the period.

[172] Despite the fact that the use of colour was a key feature of Murray's modern glass aesthetic I have found only one example of a colour photograph of glass used in an exclusive art and design journal of the time, but it is an illustration of coloured glass by James Powell & Sons Ltd as opposed to an agency-produced display advertisement. See *Industrial Arts*, Winter, 1938 (no page ref). However, it is important to note that the use of high quality black and white photography for advertisements and journal illustrations in Britain (especially when combined with the use of Modernist typefaces and layout) was a mark of modernity and sophistication, which conferred those same values on the products that were illustrated.

[173] Russel Wright is best known now for the organic forms and subtle colours of his 'American Modern' tableware designed in 1937. Contemporary photographs of his shop interiors and displays show not only his sleek modern styling but also a highly developed ability to display and promote modern, coordinated domestic lifestyle accessories.

was a major influence.[174] There is no evidence to suggest that Murray was or even might have become the British counterpart to Wright because the latter was more disposed to play an entrepreneurial role in terms of having designs made under his name and originating new contexts for retailing his 'Russel Wright' merchandise.[175] However, there is a degree of convergence in terms of new concepts relating to both the design and function of products and to 'modern' consumers' lifestyles. At the very least, the organisation of visual material in the Stevens & Williams 1935 promotional brochure addresses a discerning consumer with 'modern' attitudes to homemaking and living rather than a design reformer or glass connoisseur who seemed to be the principal addressees of the 1933 brochure. The absence of any evidence that this was a conscious strategy on either the part of the firm or of Murray himself, suggests that the new emphases outlined above were the products of a promotional strategy conceived by advertising specialists who were more in touch with consumer wants and aspirations.[176] That argument is supported by factors such as the distinct changes of approach between the 1933 and 1935 brochures, which suggest that the concept of a distinct 'designer' range (as opposed to a the original concept of a 'modern' glass range) had emerged in the interval and was consequently viable as a marketing concept.

With regard to conceptualising the consumer audiences for promotional material it is also important to take into account the general cultivation of homemaking as a new commercial category in Britain in the early decades of the twentieth century, especially via the annual *Ideal Home* exhibition and its spin-offs in the press. Design historian Deborah Ryan, argues that the *Ideal Home* exhibition both promoted a progressive outlook towards domestic living and also fostered a consumer ethos in women across a broad class range.[177] Evidence of that was the promotion of gadgets and labour-saving devices that were demonstrated and sold at

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[174] I have come across only one British article about his work from the 1930s: Author unknown, 'Designers of Today: Russel Wright', *The Studio,* 1935

[175] See Russel Wright, *Russel Wright: Good design is For Everyone,* Russel Wright Design Center, New York, 2001

[176] In Murray's writings and in the oral interviews I conducted with Reginald Williams-Thomas, director in charge of the Keith Murray glass, there was no mention of designing discrete ranges. According to the latter, the firm might discover that it needed a greater variety of jugs and Murray would be asked to design a number, some of which would be selected for production. Thus he tended to work at the level of the individual item except in the case of sets (eg table glass or toilet sets), which were designed as a single entity and subsequently entered in the *Keith Murray Works Description Book* under a single design number.

the exhibition from its inception in 1908. Consumer interest (whether to inspire purchase or simply to inculcate aspirations and fantasies) was focussed on much bigger spectacles, namely real examples of commercially-available houses set in make-believe villages. The houses, whether Modernist or traditional in style were always fitted out with 'modern' features and thus promoted progressive attitudes.[178] In the 1934 exhibition the theme of the housing exhibit was the 'Village of Tomorrow' and all of the houses were versions of International Style architecture.[179] Ryan's interpretation of the commercial mediation of progressive design in Britain between the wars concurs with Marchand's conceptualisation of an emergent consumer culture in the United States in which the modern and modish female (and especially the housewife) as its most receptive constituent was idealised.

Cultivating the specialist designer concept - publicity for special designs and one-offs

Murray's reputation as an industrial designer was enhanced through a small number of special commissions and projects that were reported on in the trade and design press (probably as a result of effective PR policy). The first such commission was for a pair of cut glass vases designed by Murray and made by Stevens & Williams for presentation to the Mayor and Corporation of Buxton.[180] In the following year the firm received publicity in the trade press for industrial storage jars for pharmaceuticals designed by Murray and manufactured by Stevens & Williams for ICI.[181] Stevens & Williams were clearly aware of the publicity potential of special commissions by their leading designer as evidenced by a display advertisement in *PGGTR* featuring a glass plaque designed by Murray for the

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[177] See Deborah S. Ryan , op cit *The Ideal Home Through the 20th Century.*

[178] Ibid. Ryan explains how new mechanical fitments and devices featured at the exhibition were reported on in the *Daily Mail* (especially when the item was being inspected by some female celebrity in the presence of the Mail's photographer). See her examples of actress Ellen Pollock trying '...an electric washing machine, a slimming machine and a comfortable chair in front of an electric fire in 1935' p. 79.

[179] Ibid, see 'Minimalism and Modernism', pp 70 – 79.

[180] The vases were presented on behalf of the Society of Glass Technology and the Glass Manufacturers' Federation on the occasion of the Third Glass Convention held in Buxton in May 1933. For illustration of the presentation glassware see 'The Third British Glass Convention – A Record Attendance at Buxton', *PGGTR,* June 1 1933, p 721.

[181] For illustration see 'Chemical Bottles at the B.I.F', *Design for Today,* April 1934, p. 151

Architectural Association and engraved with motifs of architectural drawing tools.[182] Murray's architectural background was probably also the reason why his designs in glass were selected for the Dining Club of the new Royal Institute of British Architects (R.I.B.A) headquarters at Portland Place, London.[183] It was a condition of acceptance that all of the items chosen for the Dining Club were stock items that could be purchased by the general public at reasonably affordable prices. Murray added a discreet monogram and etched star motif to drinking glasses and a table jug glass designed by him and already in production at Stevens & Williams. To complete the service, three decanters were chosen from the Keith Murray range. In reporting on the selection or wares for R.I.B.A Dining Club commission, the architect, H.S Goodhart–Rendel, F.R.I.B.A, commented:

> 'All of these things – plate, crockery and glass – are of patterns that can be bought by anyone, and bought at a moderate price. The choice of them does great credit to the good sense of the selecting committee, and it may be hoped that it will have some value for the firms whose wise choice of designers deserves the reward of extended patronage.'[184]

The way that Stevens & Williams (or their publicity agents) exploited the achievements of their celebrated designer is demonstrated in two advertisements and one related promotional communication following on from the R.I.B.A. commission. The first was a display advertisement for their Keith Murray glass range in a catalogue for the first public exhibition held at the new R.I.B.A headquarters to coincide with its opening.[185] That was followed in January 1935 by an announcement in *Architectural Review* accompanied by a photographic illustration of Murray's designs for the Dining Club. The photograph was the same one reproduced in the Goodhart-Rendel review and its public relations purpose and origination becomes clear in the accompanying text: 'Messrs Stevens & Williams have sent to me the photograph which I reproduce here illustrating the glassware made by them for the R.I.B.A

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[182] *PGGTR* Sept 1935 p. 1122. The photograph is captioned: 'Designed by Keith Murray A.R.I.B.A' Murray was trained at the Architectural Association School and taught there in the 1920s so the commission probably came about through his contacts.

[183] The new RIBA building was designed by George Grey Wornum (1888 – 1957), in c.1932 and completed in Nov 1934.

[184] H.S Goodhart–Rendel, 'The Design of the Plate, Glass and Earthenware Supplied for the Council Dinner Club', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects,* November 1934, pp 78 – 80.

[185] Op Cit *International Architecture 1924 -1934: Catalogue to the Centenary Exhibition of the Royal Institute of British Architects,* p xv

Dinner Club'[186] The firm used the same photograph again in 1936 for an advertisement in *PGGTR.*[187] Its copy emphasised the importance of informed selection for modern customers:

> 'Royal Brierley Crystal appeals – by sheer merit of its artistic designs – to a glass-conscious public who realise that the up-to-date household necessitates a discriminating choice of glassware.'[188]

Thus, in spite of being small achievements, the individual glass commissions and special projects which he designed for Stevens & Williams were evidently utilised to cultivate Murray's reputation as a designer of note alongside other marketing strategies discussed above.

Promoting Keith Murray's designs in three materials

Murray's staging of his own exhibition and his writings on design (all but one of which were transcripts of or edited from public addresses) contributed to the public perception of him as one who was making a serious and concerted contribution to industrial design in Britain. That was recognised by M.L. Anderson who wrote of the Keith Murray exhibition:

> 'It is an exhibition which is well worth seeing, not only because Keith Murray is an able designer, but because it is most interesting to see what happens when the same mind approaches three different problems, and because, more important, it shows the three materials at their best aesthetically'[189]

However, it was largely left to exhibition designers, design commentators and enlightened retailers such as Gordon Russell Ltd. to make the link between Murray's designs in all three media. Amongst the domestic accessories sold at the furniture showrooms of Gordon Russell Ltd at Broadway and in London were designs by Murray in glass and ceramics; indeed the firm's photographic archive which showed individual room settings in the Broadway showrooms contained many examples in which one or more of Murray's designs were recognisable.[190] Thus design-conscious customers would possibly have seen Keith Murray

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[186] See 'R.I.B.A. Glassware' feature in 'Through the Letter Box', *Architectural Review,* Jan 1935, p xlviii

[187]See advertisement in *PGGTR,* July 1936, p 930.

[188] Ibid

[189] M.L. Anderson, 'Industrial Design in Three Materials', op cit.

[190] I saw those albums at Gordon Russell Ltd's Broadway studio and was allowed to make copies.

ceramics, glass and metal together in the Gordon Russell showrooms alongside other exemplary Modernist domestic artefacts from Britain, Continental Europe and Scandinavia. Another connected example was the Weekend House interior designed for the British Pavilion at the *1937 Paris* exhibition by R.D. (Dick) Russell. It was accessorised with Murray's designs in ceramics, glass and silver which the firm sold in its showrooms. Thus Murray's designs in three media were presented as ideal co-ordinating accessories for the Modernist home.[191]

Fig. 4: 11

Photograph from the firm's archive showing a display of Modernist home accessories at the London showrooms of Gordon Russell Ltd in the 1930s. Note that the silver plated cocktail shaker, ceramic cocktail cups (and possibly the large glass vase) were designed by Murray.

[191] The interior shows furniture by Dick Russell, textiles and rugs by the architect designer Marion Pepler; a Keith Murray coffee set and cocktail cups manufactured by Wedgwood; A Keith Murray silver cocktail shaker and tray manufactured by Mappin & Webb and items of glassware designed by Murray and manufactured by Stevens & Williams. Seen in photographic records of Gordon Russell Ltd.

Conclusion

The concept of industrial design was premised upon the ideal of professional design practitioners who could move effortlessly from one industry to another. In that context, the designer's engagement in a range of media or product areas is reckoned as an index of his (and he usually was male) perceptive vision and ultimately denotes professional status.[192] As this study has established, in the period in which Murray practised as a designer for industry certain arguments were constructed to champion the superficial industry knowledge of the industrial design consultant over the grounded but parochial knowledge of the industry specialist. Such a dichotomy did service neither to the new and flexible designer for industry nor to the poorly paid and under-valued staff designer. In particular, it did not adequately represent the particular role that Murray played at the two firms in pursuit of his freelance design as it envisages that role in terms of the giving of form. The wider discussion in this chapter has also considered the status of manufactured objects created by the designer for industry and especially their marketing potential. Thus, it has presented a more complex and less restricted picture of industrial design than that represented in Murray's Modernist writings.

It has also exposed the teleological nature of the arguments that Murray and other Modernists constructed to explain their passionate advocating of non-traditional design. What remains at question is the extent to which Murray and Pevsner saw the role of the designer as the principal means of promoting a machine aesthetic in advance of a fully modernised (i.e. mechanised) industry. That particular line of enquiry demands that Murray's designs be examined both as an oeuvre in order establish to what extent there is a consistent aesthetic approach through the ranges and across media, and also as individual exemplars, to consider how certain design ideas were realised in terms of materials and methods, as follows in the next chapter.

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[192] Women designers of note rarely designed across a range of media. A rare example of one who did was Laura Knight who designed posters, ceramics and glass. She was in a slightly different category because she was a professional artist. Her work in ceramics and glass was limited to one-off experiments to promote art in industry. Other female designers of renown in Britain tended to be restricted to working in one industry or medium. That was certainly the case for Susie Cooper, (ceramics), Clarice Cliff, (ceramics) and Marion Dorn (textiles).

Chapter Five

Murray's Designs in Three Media: Case Studies I - IV

Introduction to the Case Studies

This chapter will investigate the range of styles and approaches that constituted Keith Murray's interpretation of the Modern by analysing specific examples of his work in three media. That analysis will ascertain, and in some cases compare and contrast the work in terms of stylistic approach and production methods. A point of focus is the broad application of a formalist aesthetic across a range of media and methods. So it will also consider to what extent, Murray's industrial design methodology was significant in creating a new over-arching aesthetic.

The Case Studies (I – IV)

The most relevant factors for consideration relate to Murray's architectural background and training and how certain aspects were incorporated into his design methodology. So the first case study **(I)**, which examines the two principal variations of Murray's Modernist aesthetic, will analyse how his creative approach was instrumental in achieving his distinct aesthetic for industrial design. Further case studies examine **(II)** Simple, utilitarian styles pursued by Murray and **(III)** Murray's designs for decorated glass. A final case study **(IV)** explores the influence of early 20th century Swedish designs on Murray's interpretation of modern designs for industry.

All the examples included in **Case Studies I – III** focus upon Keith Murray's designs in glass, ceramics or silver, therefore the reader should assume that the designs under discussion were made (and manufactured in the case of those that were put into general production) by the glass makers, Stevens & Williams; pottery manufacturers, Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. and silversmiths, Mappin & Webb Ltd. **Case Study IV** will refer to examples of Swedish glass and ceramics as well as Murray's designs so the designer and manufacturer will be cited for each example for the sake of clarity.

Case Study I – Key Variations on the Keith Murray Modernist Aesthetic

Murray's industrial design aesthetic embraced both the traditional and the Modern. It is established that there was no particular linear stylistic development within Murray's design oeuvre because there is no evidence in the design books to suggest that his early designs were based on any one approach that either became more modern or conversely more traditional. The first part of this case study (I:A) looks at examples of what I am calling 'Modern interpretations of the traditional and the second part (I:B) looks at what I am calling Murray's formalist or machine aesthetic approach.

I:A Modern interpretation of the traditional

Some of Murray's earliest designs in both glass and ceramic (i.e those dating from c. 1932 – 3) were based on traditional or vernacular forms but given modern expression by Murray's preference for clean, restrained lines and simplified decoration. He continued with that approach (in parallel with others) and developed it so that between c.1932 and 1938 there is evidence of a broadening out in terms of the variations on 'traditional' forms upon which Murray based new designs. That was especially the case with regard to his designs for Wedgwood where, as was argued in Chapter Three, his reinterpretation of traditional forms expanded from simple British vernacular pottery staples such as beer mugs and jugs to neoclassical variations on Greek and Roman urns, vases and dishes on pedestal feet and even to reworking of Korean bowl shapes.

The following two sets of examples **(I :A i – iii** and **I: A iv – vi)** explore those two aspects of Murray's approach of interpreting and updating traditional or vernacular designs. The first set includes examples in three media whose shape and decoration refer to traditional or vernacular shapes or decorative styles. The second set of examples in three media has in common a more specific reference to Georgian or 18th century neo-classical forms.

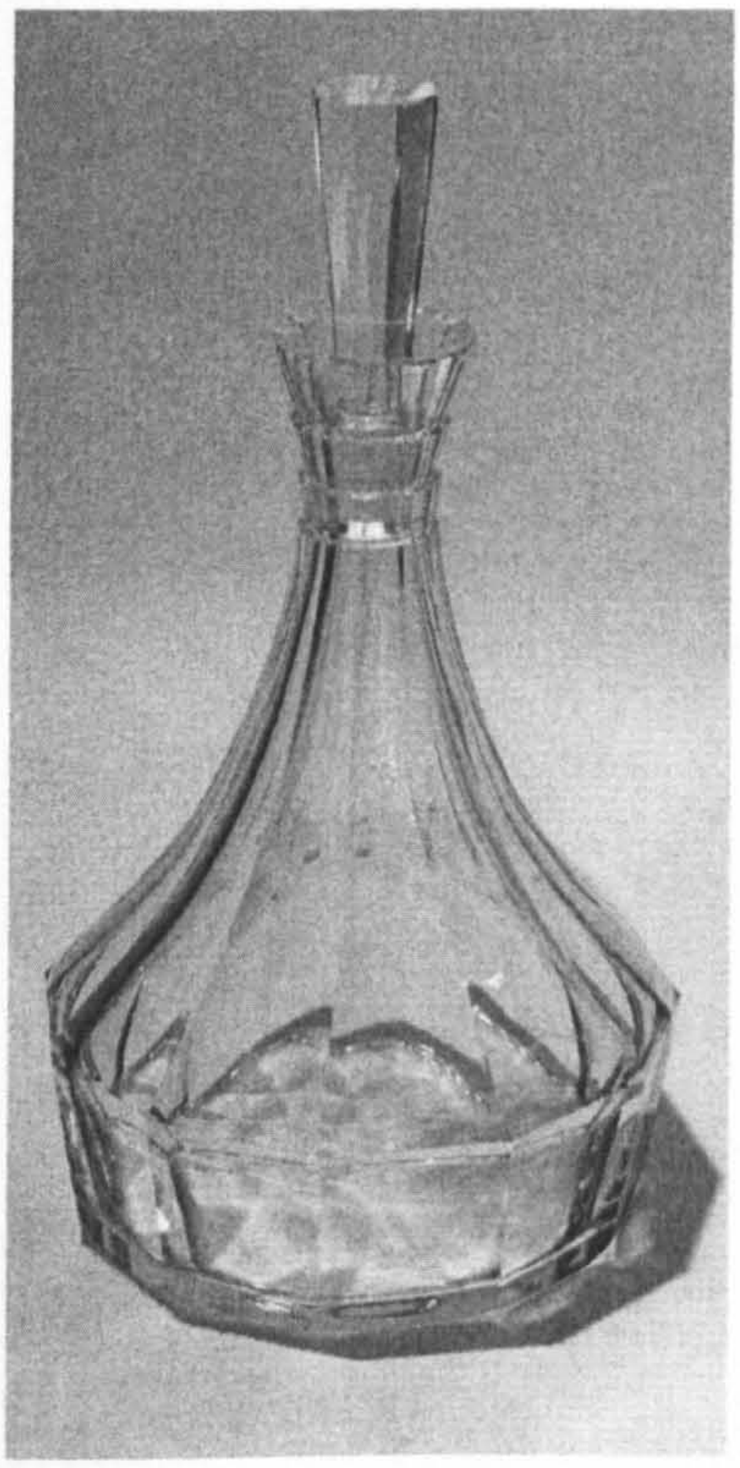
Examples: I: A (i) – (iii)

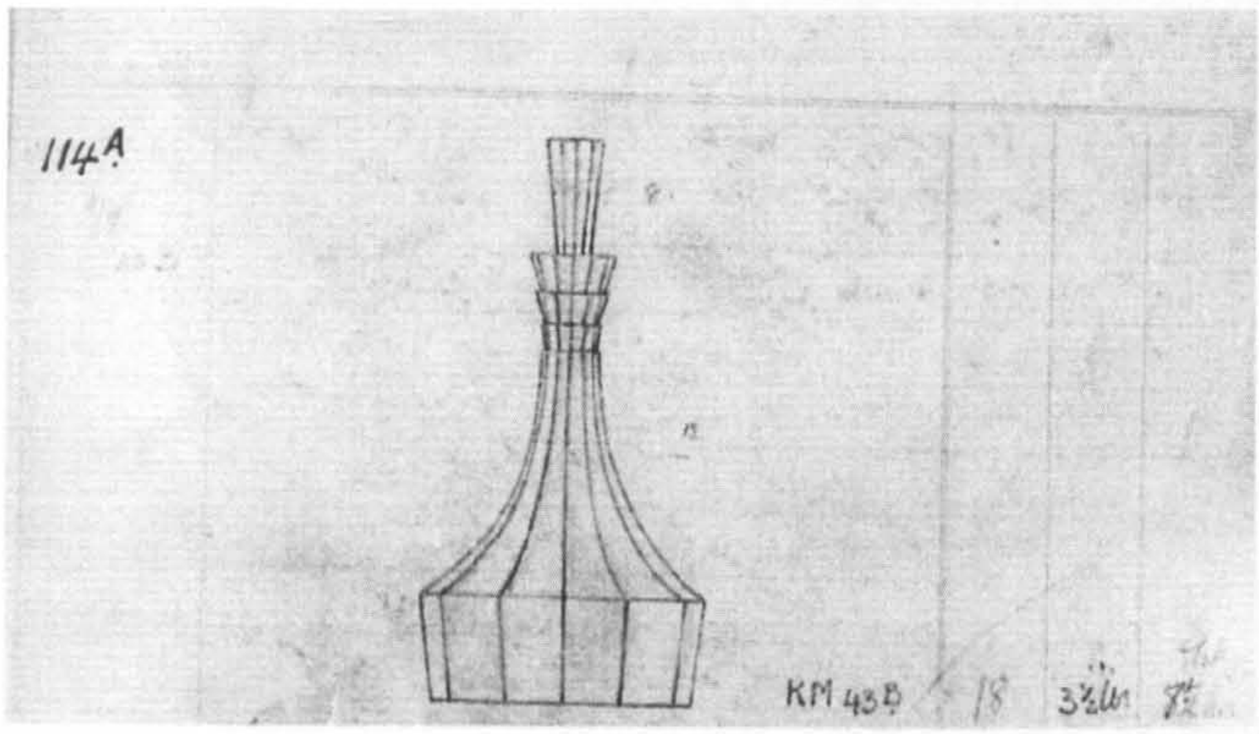
(i) Glass Lead crystal decanter (KM 114A)

(ii) Ceramics: Beer mug (design no. 3810) Jug (design no. 3822)

(iii) Silver: Tankard (cat no 23333)

I: A (i). <u>Glass Lead crystal ship's decanter (KM 114A), designed 1932 -3</u>[1]





Material: Full lead crystal weighing 3 _ lbs before cutting

Size: 11 _ inches

Price: 70 shillings (£3.50)[2]

Shape and Manufacture: The decanter has the typical broad, flat base and thick walls which traditionally gave the desired low centre of gravity suited to use at sea. It has a long and tapering 'spire' stopper, which in the original drawing was octagonal. It would have been blown by hand with a flattened off base and elongated neck. The stopper would be initially formed by the glass maker as a solid cylinder of metal by rolling it into a conical shape on the

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[1] The illustrations for **I: A (i),** are from the following sources: photograph of glass decanter – author's own; pattern book – page from *KMD Book,* author's photograph**.**

[2] Price listed in Stevens & Williams sales brochure, op.cit c 1935, p.10.

marver.[3] Both components would then be annealed (that is put into a lehr or cooling oven to cool and stabilise the glass), for many hours (at least overnight). The shape as made in the glass house (i.e. the 'blank') was not complex as indicated by the batch size of 18 per six hour shift. That figure implies that in batch production conditions each decanter would take the team 20 minutes to blow, shape and break off for annealing.

Decoration and finish: The shaping and finishing of the decanter and stopper was performed in the cutting workshop on the cutter's wheel. The factory records indicate that 7 _ hours was allowed for cutting and polishing. The cutter transformed the original curving shape of the 'blank' into a fluted cylindrical shape by making 12 regular broad panels of vertical flat cuts around the base. These were continued as an elliptical curve half way up the neck. The neck was finished with three stepped tiers of 12 vertical flutes. The stopper was flat cut with eight flat flutes to give a tapered effect and the stopper end would be ground and left unpolished to give a good fit. The vessel and fluted part of the stopper was then polished to give an all-over brilliant effect.

Comment: The ship's decanter, one of Murray's earliest designs for Stevens & Williams was intended for sherry (it was shown with a matching sherry glass), so it was designed for a modern and more domestic context than its archetype. It is very precise in terms of its profile shape and that is emphasised by the angular effect of the fluted panels. So it follows in the tradition of 'Old English' lead crystal in terms of its massiveness, its weight, its simple outline, and the depth and brilliance of the cut decoration. At the same time it also has a modernity imparted through the abstraction of a traditional shape and the mechanical nature of its decorative finish, which is used to emphasise the form. A similar approach can be seen in Murray's preference for turning on the lathe as a finishing method for ceramic designs as per the example that follows.

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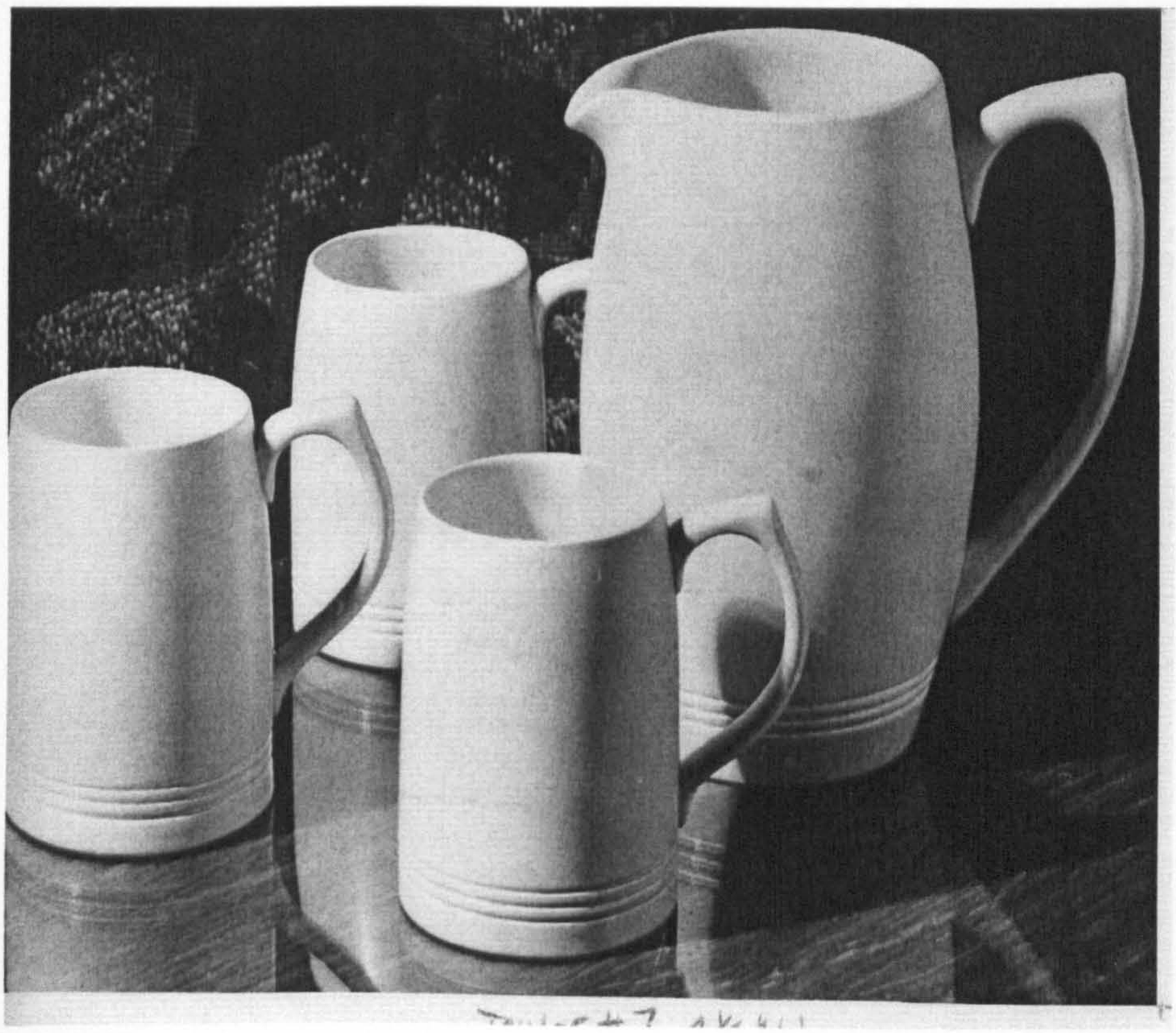
[3] A marver is a metal topped table used for intricate shaping and colouring of molten metal in the glass house. The molten glass on the end of a gathering iron or pontil is typically rolled along the surface of the marver by a glass making assistant.

I: A (ii). Beer mug (design number 3810)

Beer Jug (design no 3822) both designed c 1933[4]



Material: Earthenware with matt glaze Grey or Straw in 1933,
Moonstone, Straw or Green after 1935
(also in cheaper ivory glaze finish)

Size: Mug designed to hold _ pint of ale
3 _ pint jug, 8 _ inches high

Price: Matt glazed: Mug 3s3d (c.16p), jug 10s (50p)
Ivory glaze: 2s 11d (approx.14p) and 8s3d (approx. 41p)

Shape and Manufacture: Thrown on the wheel and finished by turning on the lathe (see below)

Decoration and finish: Shaped by turning on a machine-driven lathe whilst still in the 'green' (unfired) state to give a smooth, straighter-sided effect. The only

[4] Photograph of Beer mug and jugs **I: A (ii)**, courtesy of Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. ref.M-6083/1

decorative treatment was the addition of concentric bands at the base which were incised by turning on the lathe. This results in evenly spaced concentric bands. The items were then matt glazed and fired in kiln.

Comment: The thrown and turned beer mug that earned Murray praise from Herbert Read is a useful example because it was singled out by a leading Modernist as the best of British modern ceramics. The beer mug and jug shapes had their antecedents in vernacular pottery types but Murray's version was more straight sided and was matt glazed in a choice of subtle colours. Both were made on the potter's wheel (i.e thrown by hand) but the smooth matt white (Moonstone), yellow (Straw) or green glazes were far removed from typical vernacular stoneware or tin-glazed versions. The restrained shape married with simple incised rings created an interesting tension between modern and traditional, organic and geometric that Read possibly recognised as a new and vibrant formal aesthetic for pottery manufactured in a modern industrial setting.[5] What is interesting is that Read should assign his highest praise to an example of Murray's work that retained an historical point of reference rather than one of his more abstract and geometric designs such as the globular vase (as per the example **I:B(ii)** illustrated in the second part of this case study) which was more original because it had little in the way of formal antecedents.

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[5] Read is best remembered as a significant promoter of the Modern Movement in British art and design. However, he was also a recognised authority on ceramic art following on from his employment as a curator of ceramics at the V& A museum where he continued to exert an influence on the Museum's collecting policy into the 1970s. That is the considered opinion of the current Deputy Curator of Glass and Ceramics, Jennifer Opie, who has worked at the V&A since the early 1970s. Opie expressed those views during e-mail correspondence we had about the V&A's collecting policy in the twentieth century, May 2001. She inferred that Read's principle of 'form without decoration' held sway in terms of critical judgement (and consequently the Museum's acquisition) of 20th century pottery.

I:A (iii) Silver: Tankard designed & manufactured 1934 -5, Mappin & Webb, catalogue no. 2333[6]

Material: Sterling Silver (not silver plate)

Size: tankard designed to hold 1 pint

Price: £7.00[7]

Shape and Manufacture: Made in three parts: straight sides form on shallow hollow foot with simple D-shaped handle. Made and finished by hand methods.[8]

Decoration and finish: Polished finished and undecorated except for simple

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[6] Illustration of silver tankard shown in **I:A (iii)** taken from photocopy of Mappin & Webb catalogue. Sheffield City Libraries hold a copy of the catalogue in the Local Studies Section of the Central Library (index no 739.2). They date the catalogue approximately at 1937.

[7] Ibid Size and price given in a section entitled 'Some Beautiful Applications of British Industrial Designing', pp 163 – 167.

[8] Ibid. p 166. The catalogue alludes to development of '…modern factory practice and the reduction in cost which that achieves…'. However, given that the pieces were produced in very limited quantities, indeed some of them may have been single prototypes, the likelihood is that although the design aesthetics were modern, manufacture was largely by hand methods.

and regularly spaced incised lines along the length of the handle and around the base of foot. These may have been chased with a hand tool or turned on a lathe.

Comment: The design combines traditional elements (e.g. rounded at base and slightly flared at the rim) with modern straight sided lines and polished all-over finish. The incised lines along the length of the handle were also practical because they allowed a better grip of the shiny metal vessel.

Concluding comments to Set 1 (Examples: I: A i –iii)

In common with the ship's decanter discussed above, the ceramic beer mug and jug and silver tankard were abstracted versions of traditional or vernacular prototypes with distinctly Modern shapes and finishes.[9] I am using the term 'finishing' rather than decorating or ornamenting because, in the case of examples **(i)** and **(iii)**, cutting and turning was used to give a specific emphasis to the form of the piece rather than to add any artistic embellishment. It is Murray's use of finishing methods, especially flat cutting of glass and lathe-turning and engine-turning of ceramics that shows his ultimate aim of disguising the organic qualities associated with hand-made artefacts.

Examples: I: A (iv) – (vi)

I: A (iv). Glass: Neo-Georgian Lead crystal two-handled vase (KM 114A)

I: A (v). Ceramics: Neo-Classical Two-handled vase design no. 4225

I: A (vi). Silver: Neo-Classical Two-handled sports trophy

(Illustrated overleaf)

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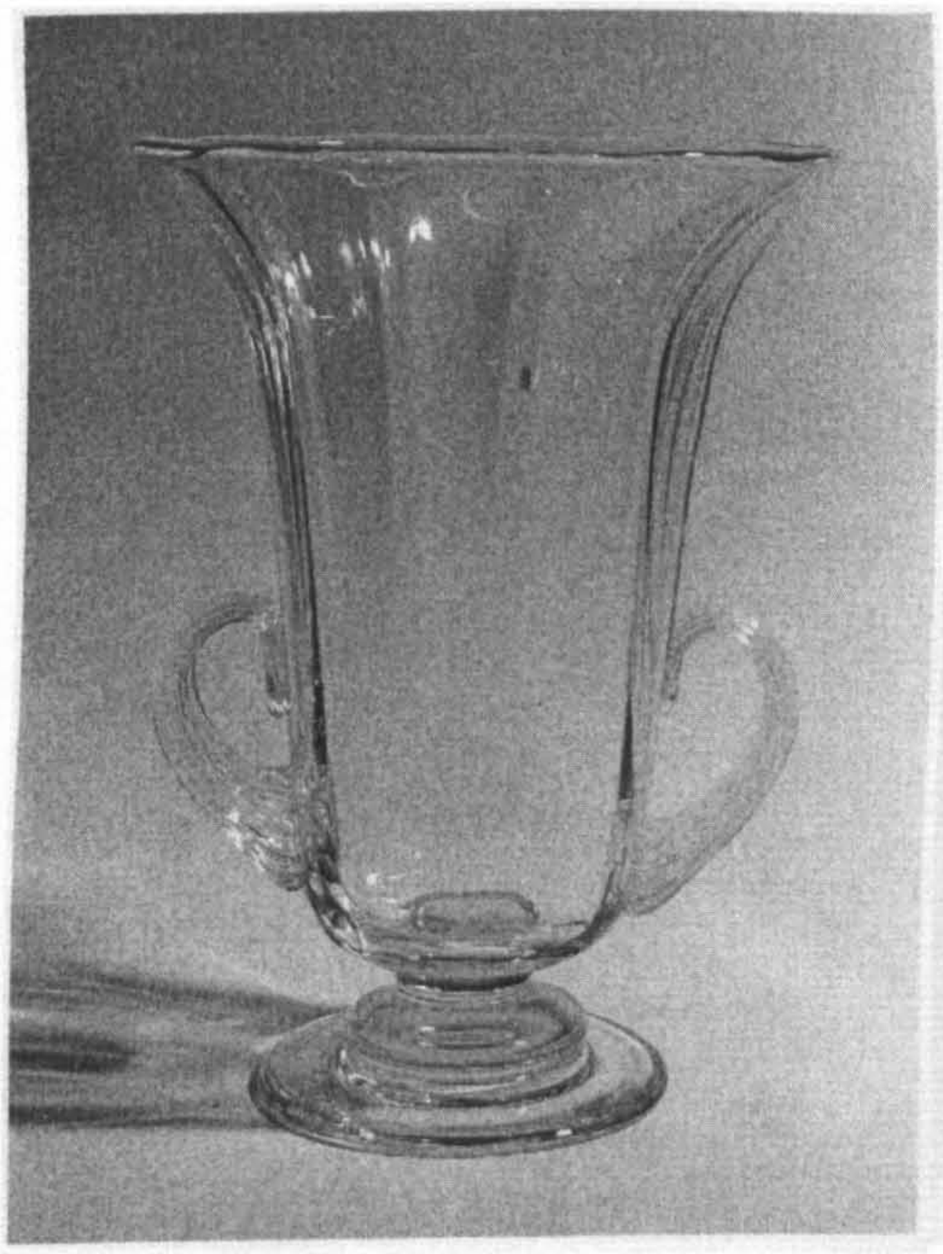
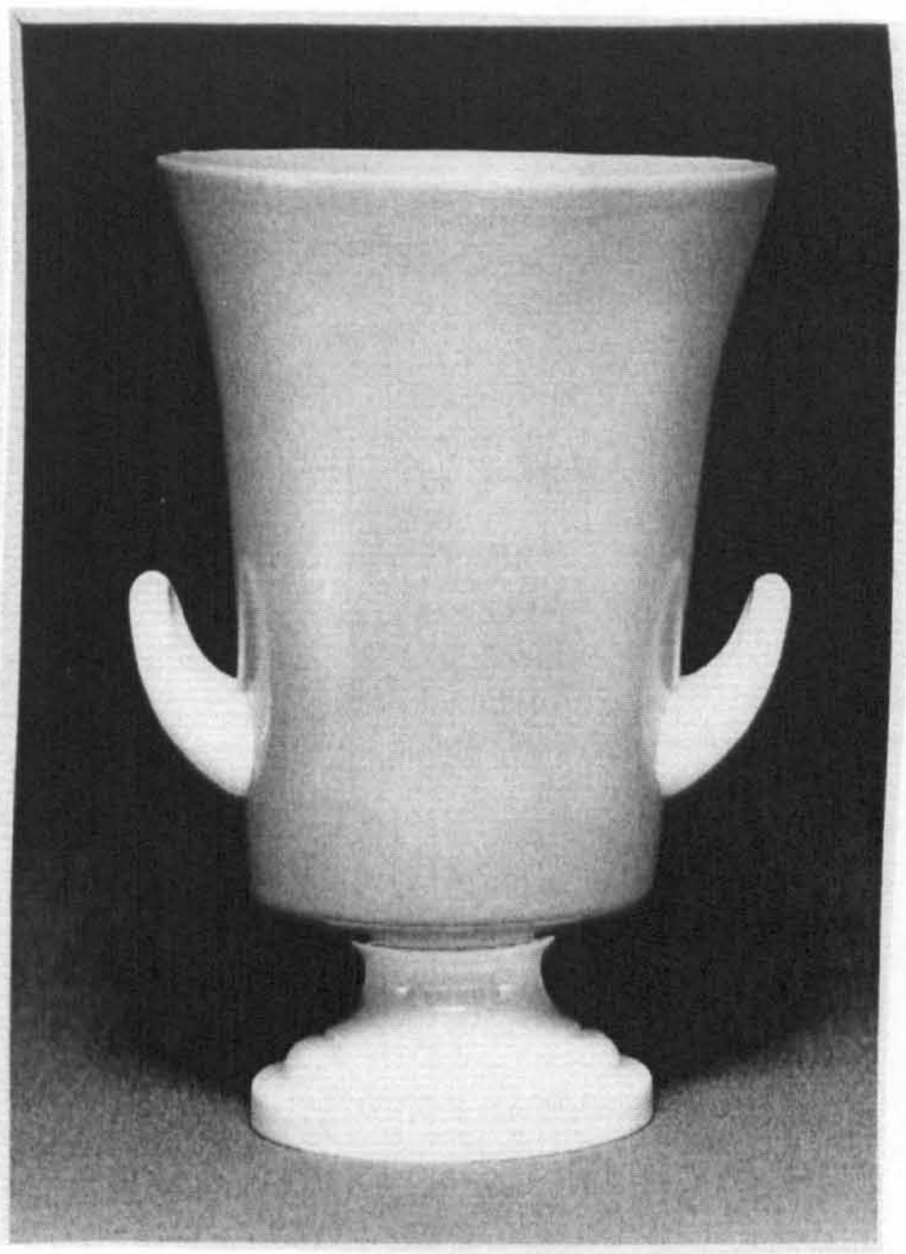
[9] There was a further version of the Wedgwood beer mug and jug dating from late 1936, made in the new two-toned coloured slip finish (in ivory with grey and cream with celadon) but it was generally advertised and featured with a 'Moonstone' (matt white glaze) finish.



I: A (iv). Neo-Georgian style lead crystal two-handled vase (KM 114A)[10]



I: A (v). Ceramics: Neo-classical Two-handled vase design no. 4225[11]

I: A (vi) Silver: Neo-Classical Two-handled sports trophy[12]

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[10] Photograph of glass vase **I: A (iv)** formerly in the Stevens & Williams Glass collection (dispersed 1998), author's own.

[11] Photograph of ceramic vase **I: A (v).** courtesy of Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. ref.M-0171-2

I:A (iv) Glass: Lead crystal two-handled vase (KM 1058A) designed & manufactured 1937 - 8

Material: White (i.e colourless) lead crystal (this version). Factory drawing intimates that this was to be produced in Bottle Green glass

Size: Approx 11 _ inches high. Heavy and thick walled, utilising 3 lb of molten glass.

Price: Not known but the *KMD Book* intimates that 20 vases could be made by a team in a six-hour shift and finished in the glass house and that would have been without recourse to time-consuming and therefore expensive cutting. So although it is relatively large and heavy piece it would not have been in the highest price range, especially the version in bottle green glass which was a less expensive material than lead crystal. A tall footed vase in undecorated Bottle-green glass retailed c. 1935 at around 17s (85p).

Shape and Manufacture: Urn shaped flaring towards rim with stuck on two-tiered pedestal foot and 'reeded' handles. Although it was made by hand in the glass house the broad hollow flutes with their slight optical effect, suggests that the *paraison* (the bubble of glass that would be formed into the bowl shape) was first blown in a hinged metal mould with ribbed sides.[13] The *paraison*, which would then have the rib profile impressed on its outside, was subsequently free-blown to form the elongated bell shaped bowl.

The two tiers of the foot were applied at the glass making stage before the bowl was broken off the pontil iron.[14] The Gaffer (the master glass blower) would rotate the pontil iron whilst small gathers of molten metal were applied to the

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[12] Photograph of silver sports trophy, courtesy of Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London. Neg. no. P4300

[13] The paraison is the name of the bubble of glass blown by the glass maker on the pontil iron as opposed to a 'gather', which is a blob of glass on a pontil or gathering rod that is solid because it does not have air blown into it. .

[14] The pontil iron is a thin hollow metal rod, about two metres in length which is used for both gathering the blob of molten metal from the pot and then blowing down by the glass maker to form a bubble shape out of which hollow vessels, dishes and even glass plates can be formed or shaped.

base of the bowl by his assistant server.[15] Then, applying wetted wooden tools, the gaffer would shape the foot as though the vase was being turned on a lathe.

The piece would then be attached by the underside of the foot to another gathering iron by means of a small gather of molten metal so that the flared rim could be formed and finished. This required the bowl to be sheared off the pontil iron at which stage the bowl would probably need to be re-heated at the furnace mouth and then taken back to the chair where it would be shaped by the Gaffer with wooden tools as he rotated the iron.

The reeded handles would be made at this stage by an assistant in the team, from a small gather of metal that would be rotated on a ridged surface. One end of that gather would be applied to the side of the bowl then pulled to the correct length and thickness before being cut off by the gaffer with metal shears and the other end stuck on to the bowl side to form the handle.

Decoration and finish: Polished to give bright finish all over in the glass house.

Comment: Design based on 18th century neoclassical urn shape but with no neoclassical decoration. Massive, simplified form and reeded handles in this plain (uncoloured version) refer stylistically to early Georgian (18th century) English lead glass archetypes. The absence of applied pattern or motif together with the precise and restrained outline shape is a Modernist interpretation of traditional early English lead crystal glass making.

I: A (v) <u>Ceramics: Two-handled vase design no. 4225 designed c 1937</u>

Material: Earthenware body with two-tone slip glazes available in cream and

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[15] The pontil iron was rolled in a horizontal position backwards and forwards along the flattened arms of the Gaffer's wooden chair. The 'chair' is occupied by the leading glass maker of the team, hence it is also the name given to the glass making unit. There can be several chairs operating at the same time within a glass house dependent on the physical size of the glass house area and especially on the number of 'pots' (furnaces of glass) or openings in a larger furnace available.

celadon or ivory and grey combinations.[16]

Size: c 10 inches high

Shape and Manufacture: Neoclassical urn shape but with crisp, geometrical profile and no applied decoration. Bowl and foot thrown on wheel. Handles cast in mould then attached with liquid clay (slip).

Decoration and finish: Turned on lathe to give terraced effect to foot and to flatten base of bowl and give straighter lines to the bowl. Glazed with lighter colour liquid slip all over, then slip glazed with contrasting colour then possibly turned on the lathe to ensure a clean line where the darker and lighter glazes adjoin.

Comment: Norman Wilson had been experimenting with two-tone ware since c 1934. Wedgwood brought out a modernised version of their self-coloured earthenware table service in two-tone colours: 'Summer Sky' and 'Wintergreen' in 1934 which were successful and distinctive.[17]

Murray's designs for the two-tone finish date from late 1936 show two approaches: one as in this example, which was based on forms derived from classical, neoclassical and other traditional pottery styles; the second as exemplified later in this case study (see illustration **I.B (vi)**) utilised the contrasting effects of incising the darker layer of coloured slip to reveal the lighter coloured slip below. The aesthetic effect of the former type depended on the juxtaposition of refined traditional shapes and modern and sophisticated colours and finishes and especially the contrast between areas of lighter and darker slip.

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[16] Called 'Mixed Coloured body' in Wedgwood's *Shape Book No. 5* (current c. 1935 – 1939) and 'Slip ware' in *Catalogue of Shapes Current for 1940 – 1950.* (Wedgwood Museum).

[17] Ceramic historian, W.B. Honey clearly saw the new two-tone coloured earthenware table service as representing a new and commendable direction in design at Wedgwood after 1930 (a period which he titled 'Modern Wedgwood') as he discussed them and illustrated them in his book devoted to the history of the firm's products, see W.B. Honey, Ch. 4 'Modern Wedgwood Ware', in *Wedgwood Ware,* Faber & Faber, 1948, pp. 22 -2 8 and plates D and 91.

I: A (vi) Silver : Two-handled cup and cover designed & manufactured 1934 -5, Mappin & Webb catalogue no. 23330

Material: Hallmarked Silver (not silver plate) with ivory finial

Size: 12 _ inches

Price: £24.17s.6d[18]

Shape and Manufacture: Made in three parts: straight sided vase form on shallow hollow foot with knopped lid. Has pair of severe cast handles of simple rectangular section which flare very slightly at the top and scroll in a minimalist way at the base. Made and finished by hand methods.

Decoration and finish: Polished finished and undecorated except for four simple and regularly spaced chased rings below the rim, two on the base and five smaller rings on the lid knob. The ivory finial carved as three gradating spheres, each with minute fluted facets all over the surface of each spherical section.

Comment: Combines neo-classical elements with modern straight sided lines and minimalist geometric decoration. Characterised by a sense of restraint that was typical of Swedish versions of Georgian or neo-classical designs, epitomised as 'Swedish Grace'. The whole design seems to exist in a state of aesthetic tension between Modernist and traditional idioms as, for example the counter-balance of the highly polished but largely undecorated surface finish and the carved ivory finials.

Concluding comments to Examples: I: A iv –vi

The trio of examples above share the same abstract qualities as the first set of examples; most notably restrained shapes and rectilinear profiles. Like the first set, they are clearly based on designs associated with British traditions in

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[18] Size and price given in Mappin & Webb printed catalogue, in a section entitled 'Some Beautiful Applications of British Industrial Designing', op.cit.

ceramics, glass and silver but in this case the stylistic references are more specifically to 18th century neo-classical or Georgian examples, a period which decorative arts specialists and collectors conventionally revere for the standards of design and craftsmanship in British manufactured artefacts. However, there is relatively little if any classical reference in the decoration and in that respect they had more in common with pared down twentieth century versions of the neo-classical, especially that associated with Swedish architecture and design.

Conclusion to Case Study I A:

The examples discussed in this case study show how Murray brought Modern expression to all three of the media he designed for by reworking traditional shapes (not always vernacular types) associated with British manufactures in ceramic, glass and metal. In the case of glass, he also incorporated traditional decorating methods, especially broad fluting and reverse diamond cutting associated with Georgian glass, into his Modernist interpretation of the traditional.

Murray also achieved Modern expression by designing new forms (i.e forms not derived from existing types) for traditional materials and methods as the next examples discussed in this case study demonstrates.

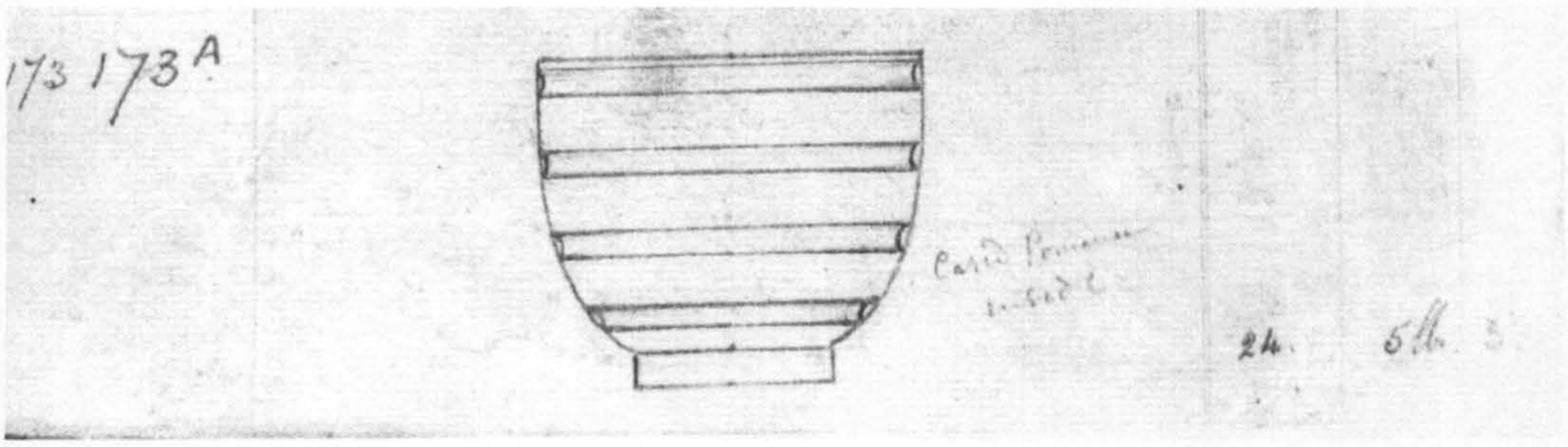
I: B Formalist / Machine Aesthetic

Case study **I:B** analyses and compares three sets of paired examples **I:B i - vi**; (ranging across glass, ceramics and silver). This category represents examples of Murray's glass and many examples of his ceramic designs that are distinctive because they have a contemporary 'look' that is not based on recognisable traditional or vernacular forms. I am calling that category 'formalist / machine aesthetic' because I am arguing that it represents the most abstract (and abstracted) version of Murray's Modernist design aesthetic. The term 'machine aesthetic' is used in this context to make a clear connection between certain formal qualities and their capacity to symbolise the new world of machines in which they were conceived and produced.

I: B (i) Glass: Bowl 173A designed c 1932-3[19]

I:B (ii) Ceramics: Vase Shape no 3765 designed c 1933[20]

I: B (i) Glass: Bowl 173A designed c 1932-3



Material: Heavy lead crystal glass (weight 5lbs)

Size: Not indicated but is very similar to a later version in Sapphire Blue glass (probably cased inside plain crystal) design no. 275A. That version was 7 _ inches in diameter.

Price: Not indicated but later version design no 275A retailed for 41s (£2. 05p) in c. 1935, therefore it was at the higher end of the price range for Keith Murray glass range.

Shape and Manufacture: Hand blown into spheroid shape and cut across to form bowl. Has applied (stuck on) cylindrical foot or base. According to the factory costings for batch production, each piece would take the team about 15 minutes to blow and shape. The piece then went into the annealing oven at least overnight, in order to harden and stabilise.

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[19] The illustration is from the *Keith Murray Description Book,* (hereafter the *KMDB* op.cit. as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Accompanying the profile drawing of the piece was information about a) number of blank shapes produced in a six-hour shift in the glass house – in this case 24 pieces; b) weight in pounds before cutting, which indicates the massiveness or otherwise of the piece – this bowl used 5lbs of metal so it would have been thick-walled in appearance and expensive to manufacture; and c) decorating time in the cutting shop – in this case 3 _ hours of hand finishing on the cutting wheel, again, indicative of an expensive, hand-made item.

[20] Exhibited at the John Lewis in-store exhibition in Nov. 1933.

Decoration and finish: (Cutting time 3 _ hours) Bowl has four equal sized horizontal bands of inverted or hollow fluting cut on the wheel spaced at regular intervals from base to the rim. Note that this was not flat cut (the flutes have a slightly rounded concave profile). The rim itself is flat-cut on the top and outer edges. The cutting time was estimated at three and a half hours per item, which gives some indication of the laborious hand work and finishing involved in the cutting shop to achieve that formal effect. The bowl is polished to give a bright effect.

Comment: Although the bowl shape and its cut pattern might be described as simple this represented a fairly expensive item because each piece was individually blown by hand by a skilled glass blower and shaped by the team in the glasshouse. A good deal of expensive material was required to achieve its solid, thick-walled effect. It then took considerable time for a skilled craftsman to cut into the thick vessel walls to gain the ribbed profile achieved by cutting on the wheel. Although it required a steady hand and good hand-eye judgement, the evenly spaced bands of flat cutting would have been arduous and monotonous to achieve as the piece was lifted onto the cutting wheel by the operator and held over it exerting appropriate levels of pressure for some three and a half hours. So in this example and others like it (see Chapter Two, Fig. 2:5) the simple, geometricised shape and mechanistic decoration was the product of skilled and repetitive hand making and decorating techniques. Thus, although this example is located in the 'machine aesthetic' section, its aesthetic was achieved by intensive handcrafting at all stages of the bowl's manufacture.

I: B (ii) Ceramics: Vase Shape no 3765 designed c 1933[21]

Material: Earthenware with matt glaze available at first in White, Grey, Straw or Green matt glazed finish[22] and post 1935 in white, green or straw.

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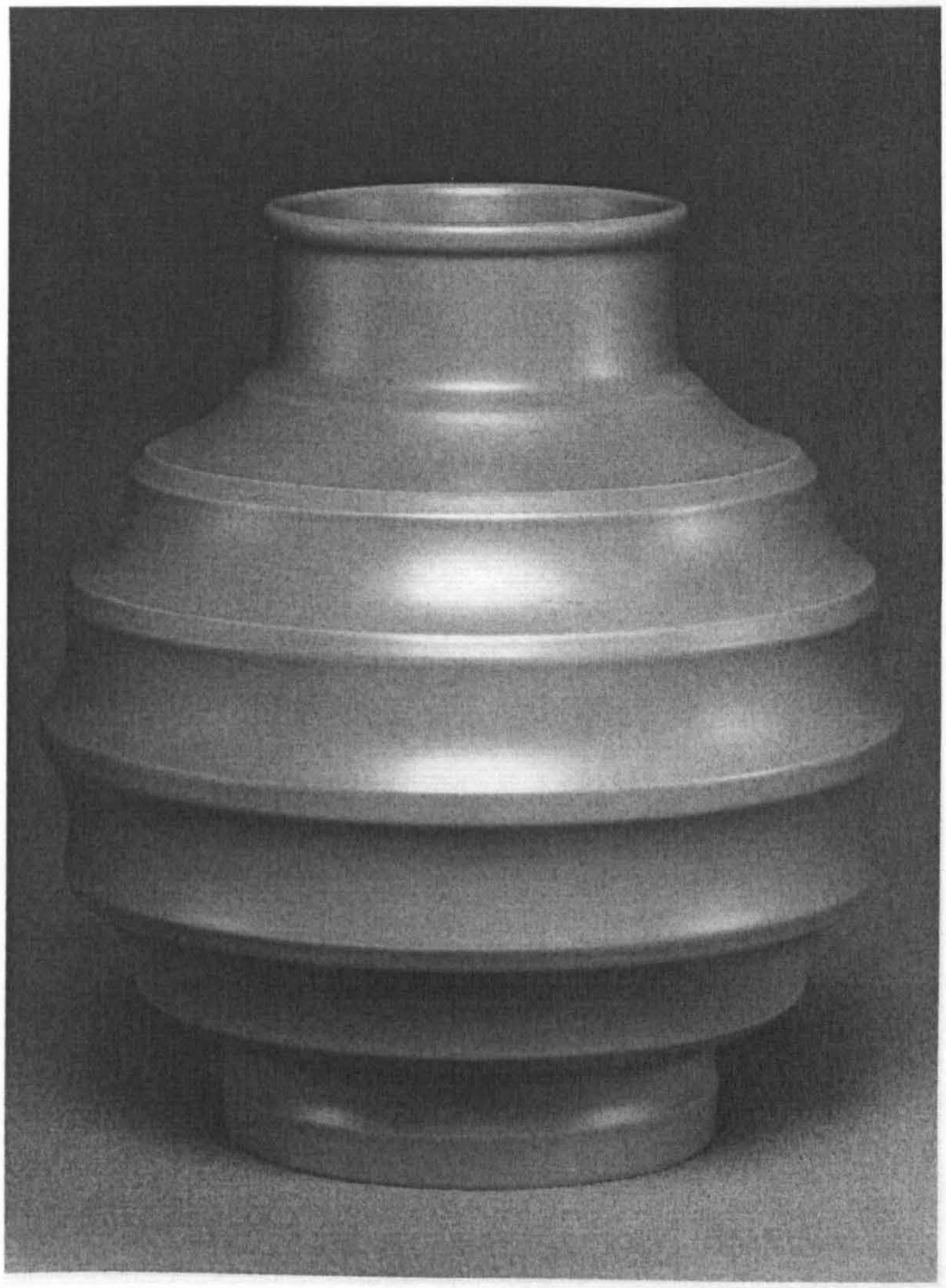
[21] The photograph of the vase **I: B (ii)** is by courtesy of Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. ref M-0171-3

[22] Details from Wedgwood promotional brochure: *Wedgwood. Designs by Keith Murray*, c 1933 (Wedgwood Museum0

Size: Available in three sizes: 6 inches; 7 _ inches and 9 inches high.

Price: 6 inches high – 10s 6d (52.5p); 7 _ ins – 14s. (70p); 9 ins. – 18s 6d (92.5p)[23]



I: B (ii)

Shape and Manufacture: Thrown by hand on the wheel into a globular form with flattened base. Cylindrical neck shaped on the wheel.

Decoration and finish: Fixed onto a machine-driven lathe whilst still in the 'green' (unfired) state. The lathe operator shapes the ribs by applying a tool to the side of the vase at it is turned on the lathe. This results in evenly spaced concentric bands which have a smooth, regular profile curved as per the profile of the turning tool. The vase is then biscuit fired and glazed.

[23] Ibid

Comment: Despite its Modernist appearance this vase was made using techniques that were common in the 18th century. Although both the potter's wheel and the turning lathe were machine driven by the 20th century, both methods of forming and decorating were essentially handicraft skills because they relied on the judgement and dexterity of an experienced craftsman. The price was considerably less than Wedgwood's ornate hand-painted ware, such as Daisy Makeig-Jones's *Fairy Lustre* and *Dragon Lustre* which it could be argued, Murray's Modernist home accessories superseded.[24] However, although Murray's vases were not in the highest price category for ceramic vases, they were not at the cheapest end of the price spectrum. For comparison, there were simple, well designed vases manufactured by Wedgwood's close competitor, Doulton featured in the 1936 exhibition *Everyday Things,* which retailed for 3s 6d (17.5p) and 5s. (25p).[25]

Concluding comments:

Both the glass bowl and the ceramic vase have similar shapes that are based on spherical form. They are both decorated by techniques that gouge out some of the original wall-mass of the piece. To that end, it might be argued that they are not decorated but 'finished' i.e. that forming and decorating techniques amount to one and the same thing. In these examples form and decoration seem to exist in a state of perfect equilibrium. In terms of Murray's design ethos, that '…decoration, if used at all, must be organised to express the form of the object, not destroy it…' these pieces are perfect exemplars.[26] However, if we consider the mechanistic decoration, not as a means of enhancing the form, but as a method of disguising its organic handicraft origins then we might question to

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[24] According to Buckley, a Fairlyland Lustre bowl retailed at £5. 4s. 6d, (£5.22 _ p.) in the 1920s. Makeig's intricate hand-painted ornamental lines were phased out in 1931 as part of Wedgwood's plans for rationalisation and modernisation. Cheryl Buckley, op.cit. *Potters & Paintresses*, p.83.

[25] These were illustrated in a contemporary review of the exhibition by "A Man in the Street". See 'Design in Everyday Things', op. cit. p 151.

[26] Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', Op cit. p 54

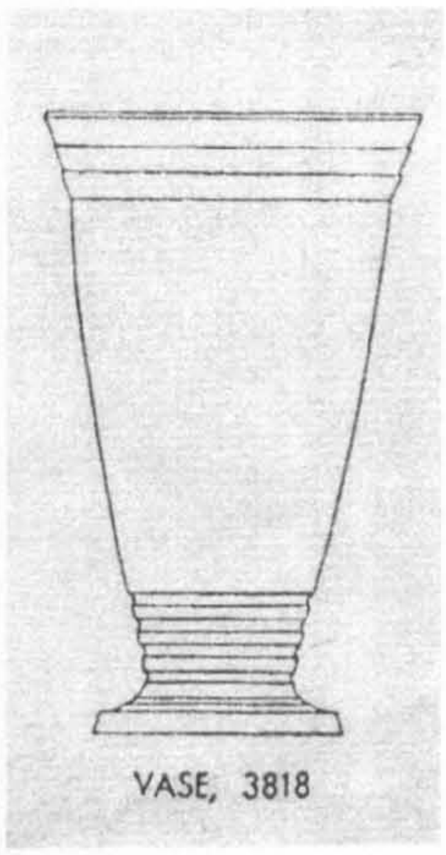
what extent Murray's interpretation of Modern form was appropriate to the materials and methods for which he made his designs.

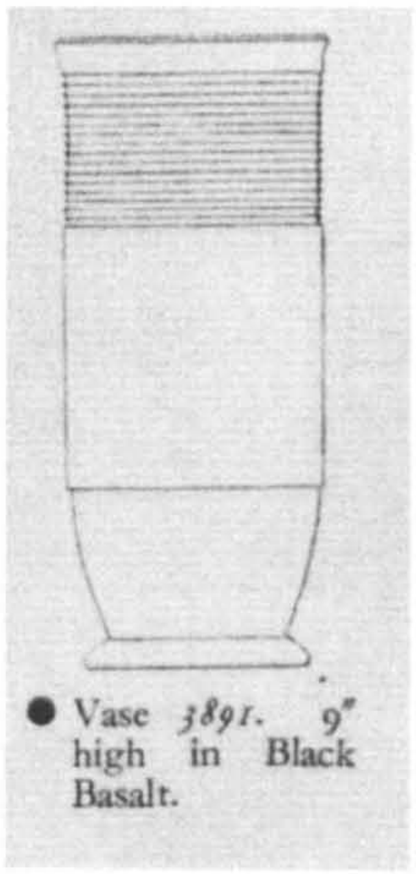
The next pair of examples of ceramics and metal designs demonstrates how some of Murray's most severely formal shapes were given minimal ornamental treatment by means of narrow rings of turned incisions.

I: B (iii) Ceramics: Basalt Vases, Shapes 3818 and 3891 designed c 1934 -35

I: B (iv) Silver vase, manufactured by Mappin & Webb, c. 1934 -5

I: B (iii)Ceramics: Vases Shapes 3818 and 3891 designed c 1933 -4[27]


VASE, 3818


● Vase 3891. 9" high in Black Basalt.

Material: Black Basalt (an unglazed black stoneware body)

Size: 8 inches and 9 inches respectively

Price: Approx 15s. (75p)[28]

Shape and Manufacture: Tall sided and tapering towards foot. Vase 3891 rounding and tapering towards foot. Both designs are drawn and listed in *Wedgwood Shape Book No. 4* (pre-dating 1935).[29] Both were thrown and turned.

I: B (iv) Silver vase, manufactured by Mappin & Webb, c. 1934 -5[30]

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[27] Shape drawings from Wedgwood promotional brochure: *Designs by Keith Murray & Animal Figures by John R. Skeaping in Wedgwood,* c. 1935, author's own photograph.

[28] Price estimated by comparison with other examples of jars and vases in basalt bodies listed in the *Exhibition of British Art in Industry* catalogue, 1935, p.28.

[29] Source: Wedgwood Museum

[30] Illustration **I: B (iv)** copied from *Catalogue & Illustrated Souvenir for the Exhibition of British Art in Industry,* 1935, p 34. (Royal Society of Arts Library, London)

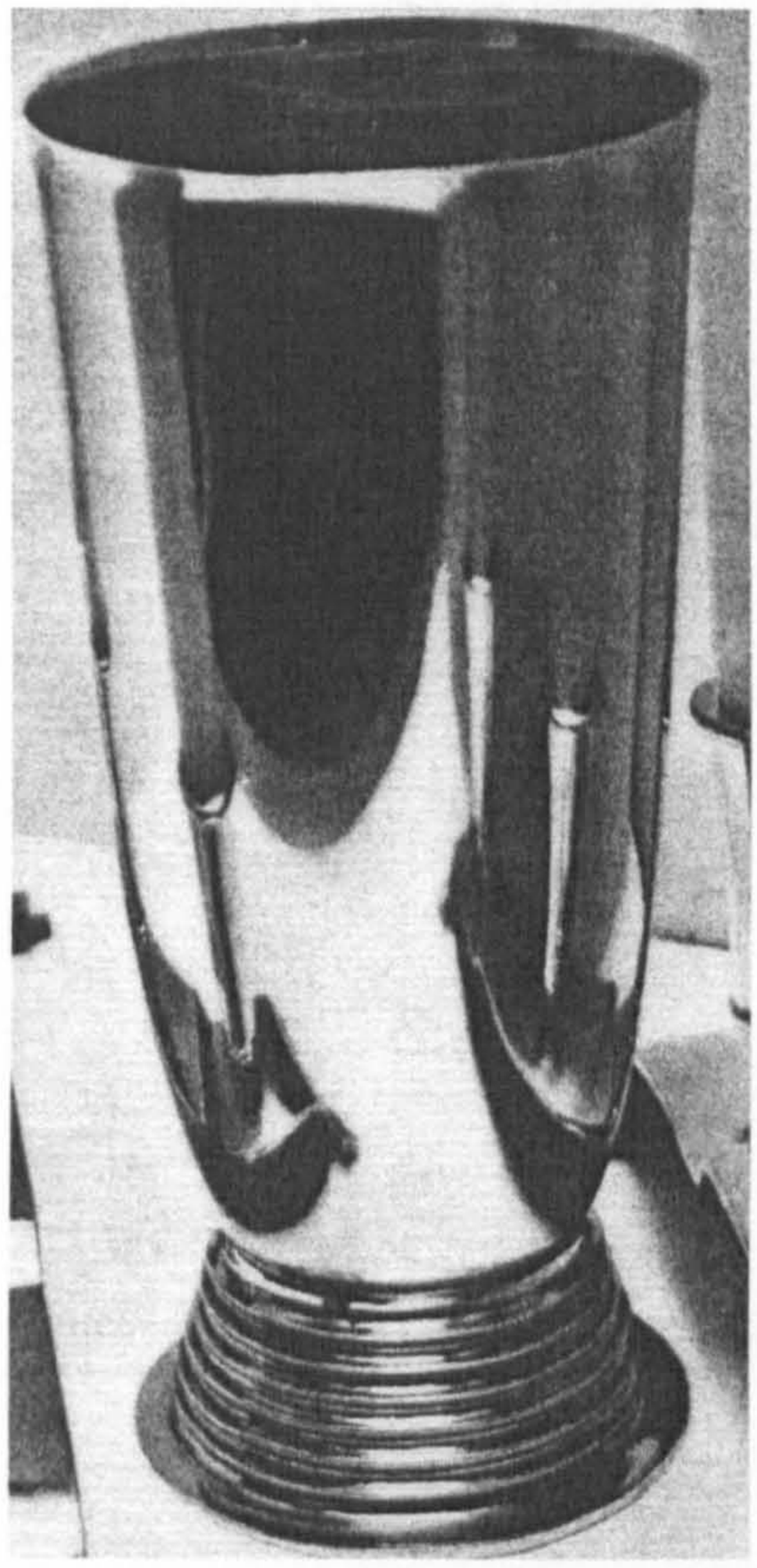
Material: Sterling silver (not electro-plate)

Size: 8 inches

Price: £7.00.)[31]

Shape and Manufacture: Tall and cylindrical but sides tapering and rounding towards base, hollow foot. Made by hand methods.

Decoration and finish: Foot decorated with six regularly spaced incised grooves engraved on a lathe. Polished finish, possibly by machine but more probably by hand using a lathe to turn the piece.



Comments: The hollow foot with its flat, flange-like base has a mechanical quality in that suggests it was stamped out of the metal in a single, machine operation: it could be a machine-part itself; for example, a component from the automobile industry. However the high price of the vase reflected the high material and handcraft costs that were inevitable in the production and finishing of silverware, whether Modern in style or not.

Decoration and finish: Vase 3818 has bands of regularly spaced incised grooves under the rim and at the base. Vase 3891 has a cut away section at the base effected by turning on the lathe and a broad band of regularly spaced incised grooves beneath the rim.

Comment: These two are variations on a theme. The *Wedgwood Shape Book no. 4* shows a whole page devoted to similar designs for thrown and turned

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[31] Size and price given in Mappin & Webb printed catalogue, in a section entitled 'Some Beautiful Applications of British Industrial Designing', pp 163 – 167. Sheffield City Libraries hold a copy of the catalogue in the Local Studies Section of the Central Library (index no 739.2). They date the catalogue approximately at 1937.

vases, which indicated that Murray designed them as a single tranche of vase shapes for the basalt bodies in approximately 1934 -5.[32]

Concluding comments (re Basalt vases and Silver vase)

The comparison of these designs by Murray has focussed principally on the style of decoration, however there are other points of comparison, specifically: the tall, slender shapes, based on cylindrical forms; and the tendency to leave large expanses of surface undecorated in order to make a feature of the dramatic surface finishes (polished silver and smooth black or bronze coloured stoneware).

The next pair of examples takes the critical examination of Murray's Formalist / Machine Aesthetic further by analysing and comparing illustrated examples of ceramics and glass in which Murray's 'machine aesthetic' is achieved using decorating effects that create patterns on the surface of his forms.

I: B (v) Glass: Vases 1052A and 1053A, designed c.1937 -8[33]

I.B (vi) Ceramics: Vases Shapes nos. 415, 416, 417 designed c. 1937[34]

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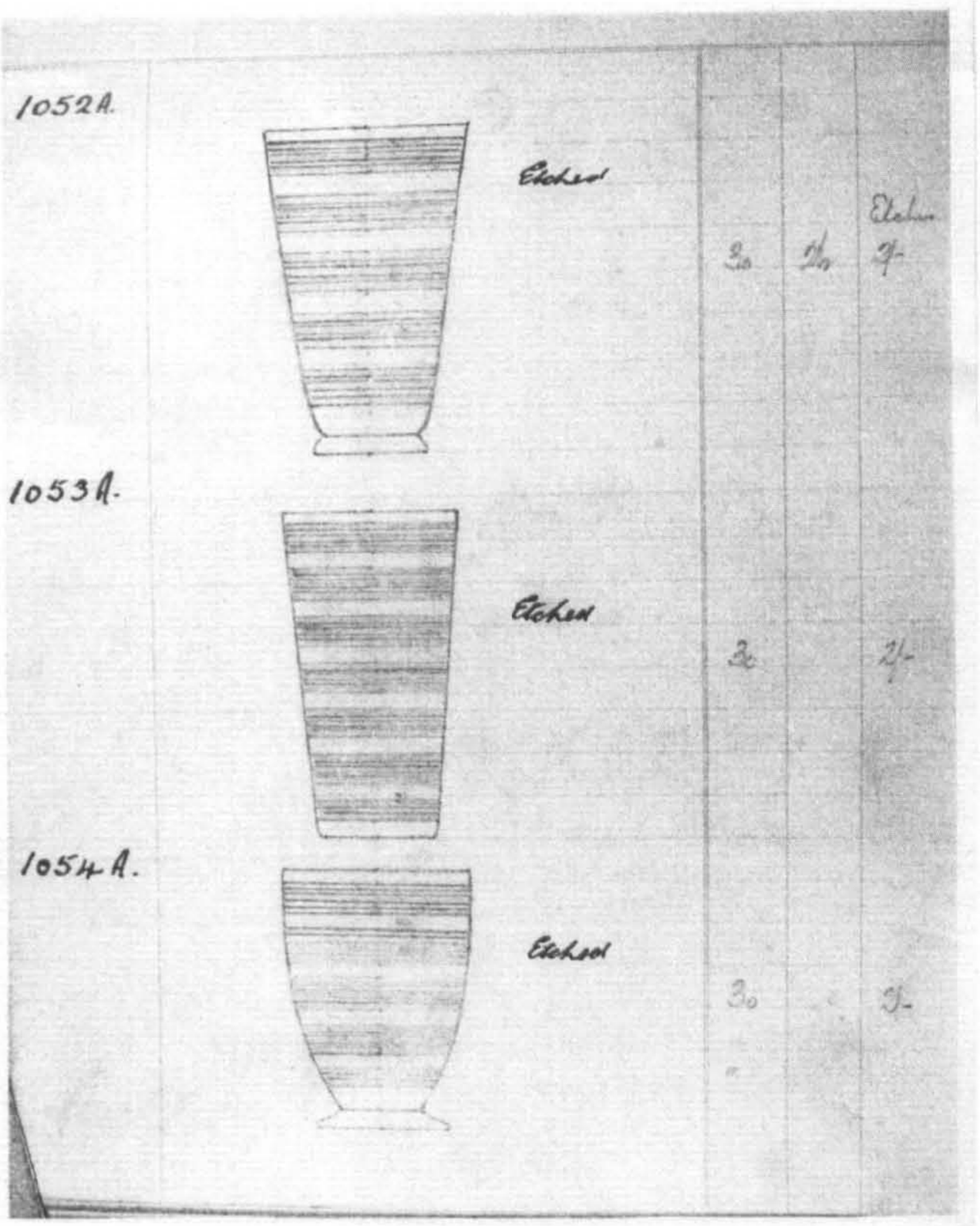
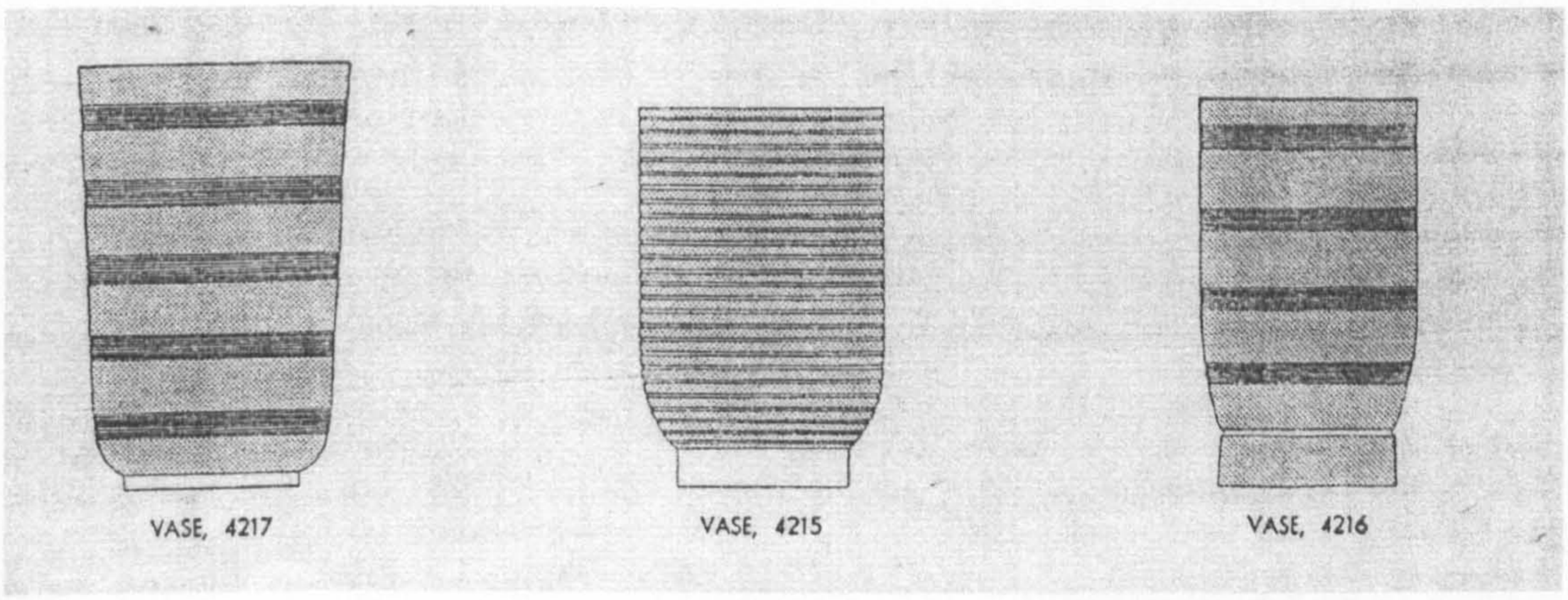
[32] Shape nos. 3882 – 3891 in *Wedgwood Shape Book no. 4,* p. 170.

[33] Page from *KMD Book;* author's photograph.

[34] Illustration copied from *Catalogue of Bodies, Glazes and Shapes, Current for 1940 – 1950,* Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. (Wedgwood Museum)



I: B(v)



I: B (vi)

I: B(v) <u>Glass: Vases 1052A , 1053A and 1054A, designed c 1938 -9[35]</u>

Material: Moderately heavy lead crystal glass (weight 2lbs)

Price: Not indicated, although the batch size (30 per six-hour shift), the

[35] I have not seen realised versions of these designs either illustrated nor in collections.

relatively low weight of metal (2lb) and the low cost of decoration (2s per item) indicate that these were relatively inexpensive vases.

Shape and Manufacture: Straight (although slightly tapering) sides. Possibly free-blown or blown-in-mould. The batch size of 30 blanks per 6 hour shift suggests that these were probably intended for mould-blowing. 1052A and 1054A have a stuck on foot.

Decoration and finish: Acid-etched in concentric narrow rings in sets of three to create the effect of larger concentric bands from base to rim.

Comment: Little is known about these particular designs. They were created towards the end of Murray's time at Stevens & Williams. They seem to be an attempt to achieve his 'machine aesthetic' style using material in a more economical way and decorating methods that did not require the time and skills of the glass cutter. In that respect they were more suited to bulk production methods than heavily cut pieces such as the bowl 173A in the previous discussion.

<u>Ceramics: Vases Shapes nos. 4215, 4216, 4217 designed c. 1937</u>

Material: Earthenware body with two-tone slip glazes available in cream and celadon or ivory and grey combinations,

Shape and Manufacture: Straight (although slightly tapering) sides. Thrown on wheel and probably turned to shape the foot and sharpen the profile whilst in "green" state.

Decoration and finish: Glazed with lighter colour liquid slip all over, then slip glazed with contrasting colour before being turned on the lathe to reveal the lighter base glaze. Sets of concentric rings incised into surface of coloured slip to reveal base colour to either all-over (design. no. 4215) or to give the effect of broad bands

Comment: The celadon and grey colours were fashionable in the 1930s and the soft, shiny two-tone glazes in those harmonious colourways were a distinct contrast to the bolder colours of the matt glazed pieces. It is not recorded how

the idea of cutting through the coloured slip to reveal the base colour came about but Murray used it extensively. His designs for the two-tone finish date from late 1936 and many had rings of incised decoration turned to reveal the lighter colour below.

Concluding comments:

It is interesting to note that they were designed at approximately the same time (i.e. approximmately1937 - 8), which suggests that Murray's machine aesthetic repertoire was expanding as he became more familiar with a broader range of finishing methods and effects. Both the glass and the ceramic vases have similar shapes with steep, straight sides. All but the glass vase 1054A tend towards being cylindrical in form. The last example is useful because it shows a shape that is more typically and easily achieved in free-blowing (although its curving sides are restrained in a manner that avoids organic expression). Therefore, it points up the likelihood that its straight-sided counterparts were blown-in-mould to achieve that effect. The ceramic vases, although formed initially on the wheel, also eschew the organic curvaceousness of handicraft pottery. In both sets of examples, the decorative effects are very similar (although there is no revealing of a second colour in the glass vases). The main similarities are the sets of rings spaced out to give an impression of broader banding in all but ceramic vase 4215 and the shallowness of the etching and turning (compared to Murray's designs discussed earlier that employed deep cutting and deep ribbed effects).

Conclusions to case study I: B (i – vi)

These pieces were selected because they share a similar distinctive aesthetic. A key feature of formalist / machine aesthetic pieces was that designs were frequently based upon geometric forms, especially globular and cylindrical forms. Those more abstract shapes lent themselves to bowls, vases and dishes rather than to specifically utilitarian items such as coffee pots, beer mugs and jugs, for which Murray's approach was often to rework traditional types as

discussed in the first part (I:A) of this case study. The detailed analysis of examples in the 'machine aesthetic' category has revealed a 'grey area' between form and decoration when forming methods, especially lathe turning was used to give a particular effect such as ribbing or the incision of concentric rings in the unfired clay body. At question here is whether this was form-giving or applied decoration. The nuance of that is exemplified by the use of turning in the two tone wares to reveal the first colour glaze beneath. That could be said to create a decorative effect because it gave the impression of a surface pattern consisting of bands of contrasting coloured slip. By contrast, the turning of the matt glazed vase (I: B (ii) Vase Shape no 3765) involves the deep abrasion of the clay body, which substantially alters the form of the pot on its outside surface giving it a distinct ribbed profile.

Conclusion to Case Study I

The final part of this first analytical case study considers how common constituents of the two principal approaches (i.e. the reworking of traditional and the formalist / machine aesthetic) may give an insight into the essentials of Murray's design methodology. With regards to Murray's approach to designing forms two unifying factors emerge: firstly the profile of Murray's shapes tends towards being rectilinear or at the least, severely restrained whether based on traditional types, neoclassical designs or machine aesthetic. Secondly Murray's shapes in these particular categories are largely (but not necessarily entirely) undecorated. They rely for their aesthetic appeal principally on the material qualities associated with the particular medium; whether that be the richness of the dark, finely grained surface of black or bronze basalt; the smoothness and subtle colouring of matt glazed earthenware; contrasting areas of coloured slip glazes (sometimes combined with incisions through the glaze showing the red clay beneath); the shine of brightly polished silver or the clarity and brilliance of

thick lead crystal glass. A factor that contributed to the excellence of finish of these examples was that they were made and finished by largely hand methods especially throwing and turning of the ceramics and hand-blowing and cutting of glass.

Decoration, where it does occur is used to emphasise formal elements and in that respect, they epitomised Read's ethos that 'ornament must fit form and function'.[36] Murray's interpretation of ornament went beyond harmonising decorative elements and formal elements of the design and sought to be appropriate to mechanical methods of decorating and/or shaping such as turning on the lathe and cutting on the wheel. In that respect Murry's interpretation of 'function' was identical with Read's treatise on machine ornament, the aim of which was to;

> '...match the values of precision and abstraction in the form of machine-made objects and abstraction in the ornaments, and these qualities the machine can provide. The impression or incision of lines, hachures, punches- and repeated ornament is an appropriate function of the machine.'[37]

However, as we have seen, Murray's designs were not 'machine-made objects', and his use of a limited repertoire of decorating and/or finishing methods, principally turning for ceramics and flat-cutting of glass often went beyond the enhancing of underlying form. Indeed, the analysis of form and methods in some examples in this case study has shown how Murray used them in order to mask the natural organic forms associated with wheel thrown pots and free-blown glass in pursuit of his Modernist aesthetic.

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[36] Herbert Read, *Art & Industry'*, (1934), 2nd. Edition reprint 1944, p 159

[37] Ibid. p 160

Chapter Five continued:

Case Study (II) Murray's designs for Slip-moulded ceramics

This case study examines examples of Murray's designs in ceramics which were made by alternatives to hand methods (although not necessarily machine methods). They include earthenware mugs, vases and home accessories and a table service, made by a casting method called slip moulding or slip casting (as discussed and explained in Chapter Three).

II (i) Earthenware Beer Mugs (1/2 pint) 3974; (1 pint) 3970, and 3971

Date designed and produced: These mugs appear in the firm's shape book in 1934[38] and mention is made of '2 book ends and 5 small beer mugs' in March 1934 in the firm's modelling book.[39] All three designs remained in production in the post war period.[40]

Material and stylistics: They were made in the light-coloured (ivory) earthenware and finished with a champagne glaze associated with Wedgwood's Queensware (cream-coloured earthenware) since the 18th century. Murray's slip-cast mugs were Modern in conception, that is they were not based on traditional forms as was the thrown and turned version illustrated and discussed earlier (see Case Study I: A.) Murray incorporated the seam mark (left after moulding the vessel in a two-part mould) into the ribbing feature of 3970 and 3971, and the fluted base of the smaller mug 3974. The handles were cast separately and then applied to the vessel with liquid slip.

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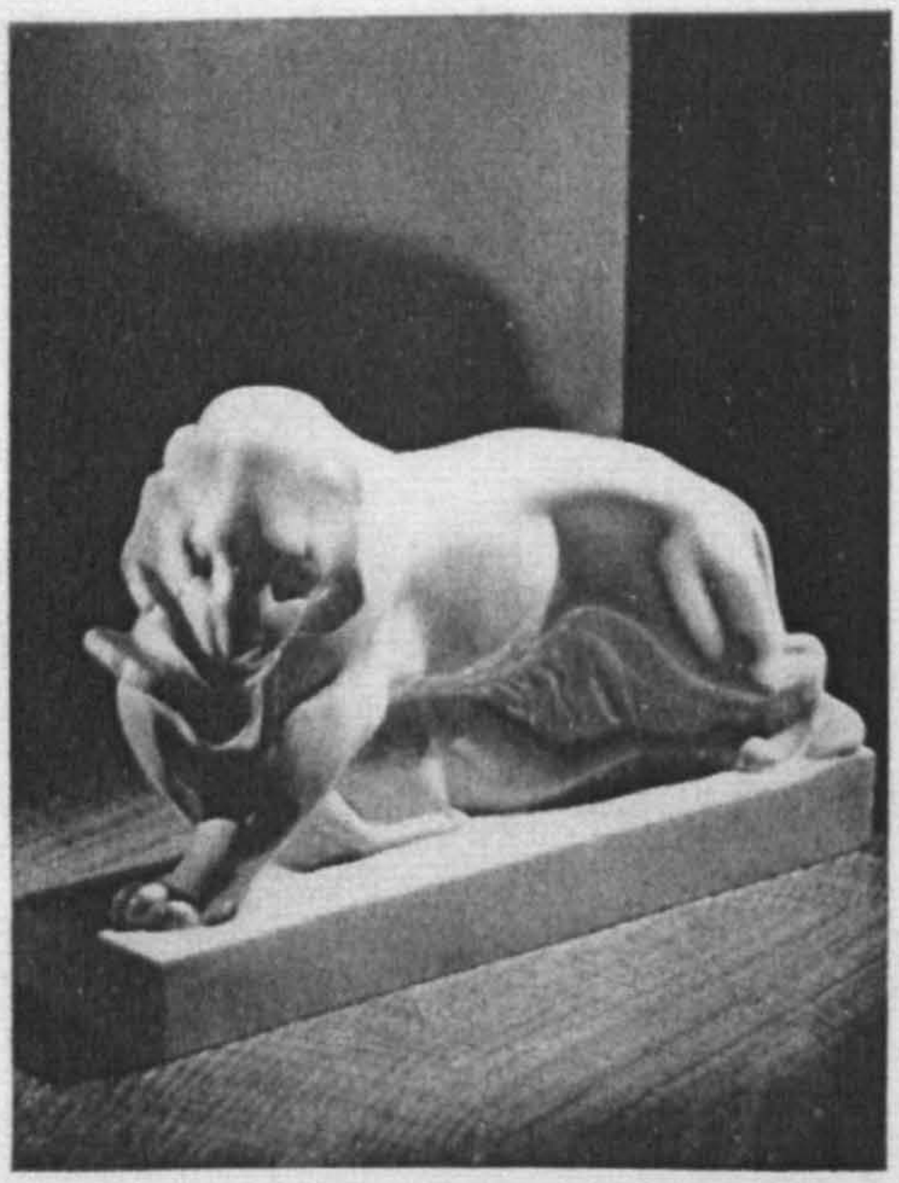
[38] *Wedgwood Shape Book no. 4*, page 189, (Wedgwood Museum)

[39] The firm's' *Modelling Book* (dating from October 1927), has entries of designs for which Plaster-of-Paris moulds would need to be prepared by modellers (mould-makers) for slip-casting. (Wedgwood Museum)

[40] All three designs (plus a jug matching 3974) are shown in the *Catalogue of Bodies, Glazes and Shapes Current for 1940 – 1950,* Josiah Wedgwood and Sons (Wedgwood Museum)

II (i) – bottom image [41]

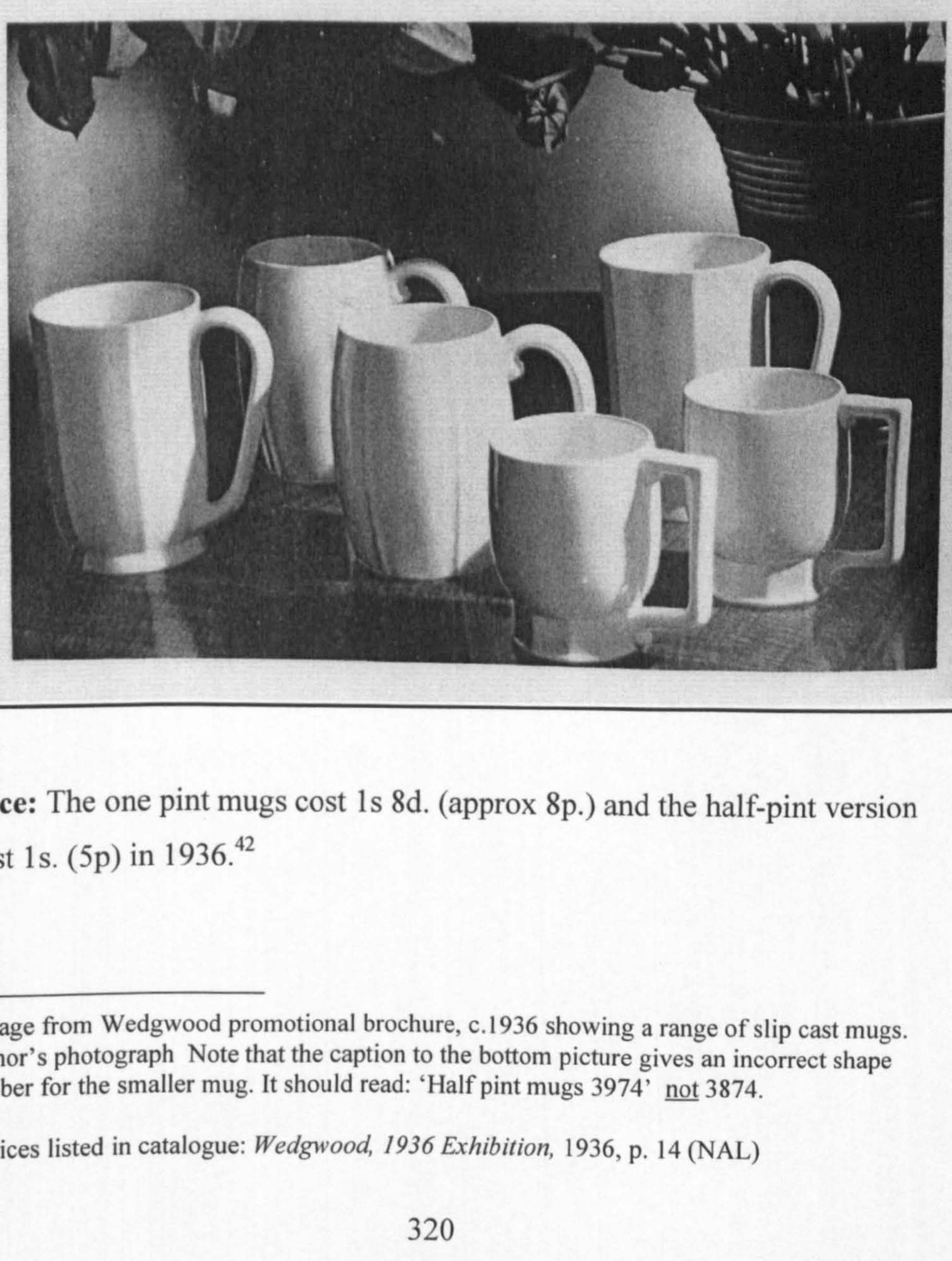


- This fine model of Tiger and Buck (*3456*) is produced in cream colour and in Moonstone. It is thirteen inches in length, the largest of the animal figures.

  3456 *in Cream colour.*
  in Moonstone.
  Black Wood Stand

- Below is a refreshing group of Beer or Cider mugs in three different designs—in pint and half-pint sizes. These are made in an ivory Queensware with a champagne tinted glaze. The pint mug on the extreme left is No. *3971*, the one in the centre *3970*, and the half-pint pair on the right *3974*. All three have strong, easy-to-grasp handles. The Black Basalt vase on the right (*3816*) stands eight inches high, and is built to hold a big bunch of flowers or leaf sprays.

  Half Pint Mugs 3874
  Pint Mugs 3970 or 3971
  Black Basalt Vase 3816



Price: The one pint mugs cost 1s 8d. (approx 8p.) and the half-pint version Cost 1s. (5p) in 1936.[42]

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[41] Page from Wedgwood promotional brochure, c.1936 showing a range of slip cast mugs. Author's photograph Note that the caption to the bottom picture gives an incorrect shape number for the smaller mug. It should read: 'Half pint mugs 3974' not 3874.

[42] Prices listed in catalogue: *Wedgwood, 1936 Exhibition,* 1936, p. 14 (NAL)

Comment: The slip-cast mugs and jug were designed after Murray had designed jug shapes: 3822, 3843, 3844 and 3845 and mug shapes: 3810 and 3821, all of which were in production by 1933 and were available in Matt glazed finish and cheaper versions in ivory glazed cream ware. All of those earlier designs were made by throwing and turning, and although the prices were relatively low (equivalent approximately to 15p for a matt glazed mug and 14p for an ivory glazed version) they could not compete with well-designed utilitarian ware by other manufacturers such as the blue and white 'Cornish Kitchen Ware' made by T. Green and Co., whose _ pint mug sold for approximately 4p.[43] So Murray's slip cast versions without a special glaze finish, were cheap enough to compete with utilitarian lines. Murray was asked to study casting processes in order that he should make designs for cheap table services (see Chapter Three, part 3 for details) however these designs for slip cast drinking sets was the nearest he came to fulfilling that directive in the 1930s.

In spite of the mugs representing a genuine attempt to design cheaper goods using a mass production method with some sensitivity they were subject to some criticism from at least one commentator on industrial design, Michael Farr. An issue for him were the handles which he thought '...appear to be experimental and, when considered in relation to the basically good shapes of the mugs, not equal to the high standards set by this firm.'[44] He showed a photograph of the mugs in order to '...emphasise the designer's difficulties when he departs form traditional shapes...' in pottery design. He was comparing Murray's conventionally glazed slip-cast versions adversely against the matt glazed thrown and turned mug and jug praised by Read. However, Read and Farr's admiration of that particular design by Murray also demonstrates that Murray's Modernist aesthetic for ceramics was achieved more satisfactorily using traditional hand craft methods.

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[43] Prices calculated from entries cited in the exhibition catalogue: *Everyday Things,* R.I.B.A, 1937, pp. 75, 80 and 81.

[44] Michael Farr, op.cit. *Design in British Industry,* example 3. opp. Page 96.

II (ii) Commonwealth table service (1948)

Date designed and produced: From 1946 - 1948 Murray was involved in the design of a new shape for an earthenware table service with members of the Wedgwood production staff.

II (ii)[45]

PLATE 516. The *Commonwealth* service designed by Keith Murray in collaboration with the technical staff at Barlaston 1946-48.

Material and stylistics: The chief considerations were that it should be designed to take advantage of the mass production facilities available at the new Barlaston plant after the war, especially slip casting and jolleying. The service was to be made of earthenware and the pieces were to be compact in order to keep material costs down. In aesthetic terms, the shapes of the new service needed be suited to a broad range of decorative treatment but it was also required to be pleasing in its undecorated state so that it could be sold in the home market, which was still subject to post-war restrictions.[46]

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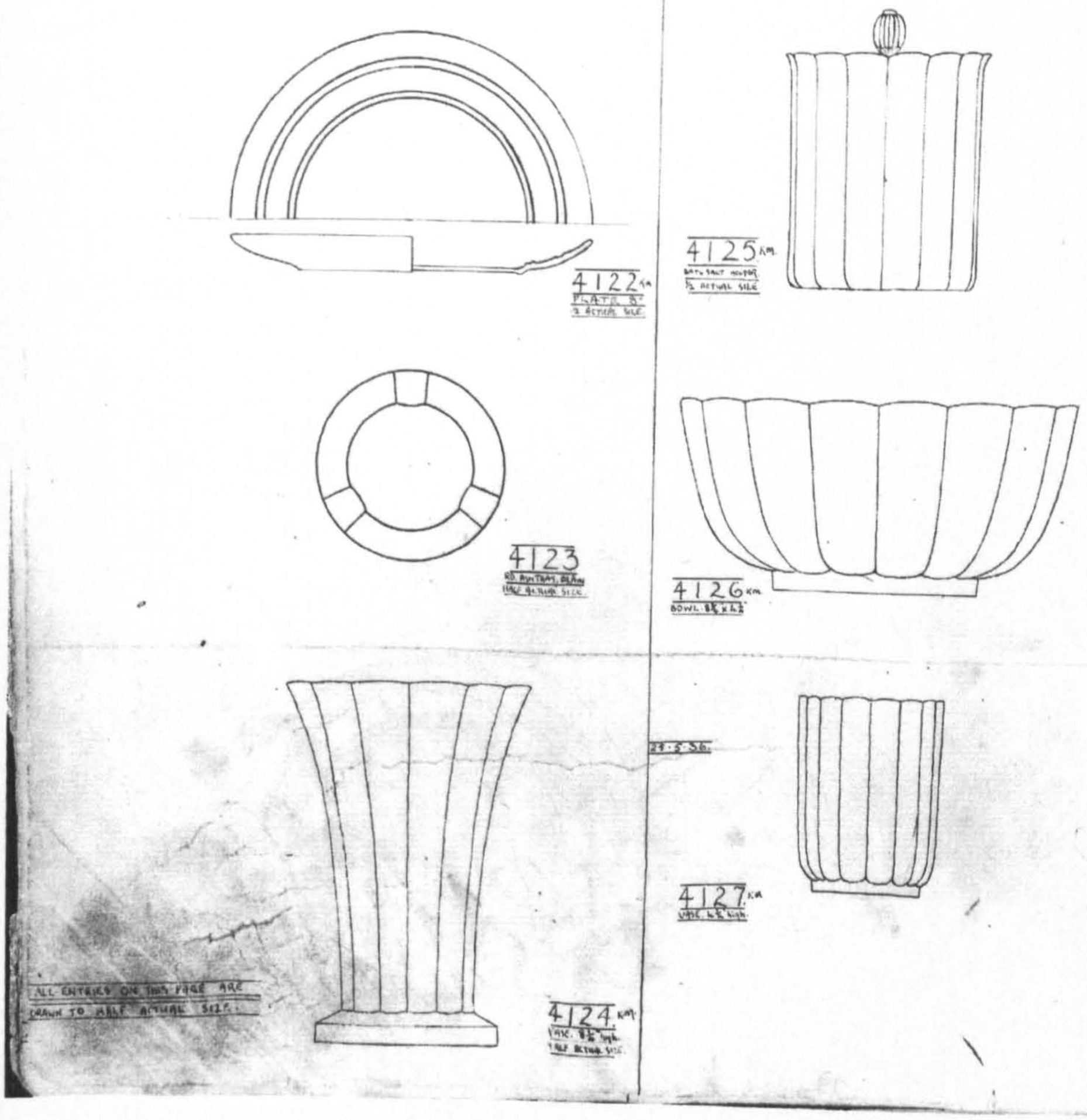
[45] Photograph copied from Batkin, op.cit *Wedgwood Ceramics,* plate 516, p. 210

[46] See Batkin, op.cit. *Wedgwood Ceramics,* p.206

Comment: The rounded forms of 'Commonwealth' is indicative of the type of shapes that can easily be accomplished by slip casting techniques where economic production is a major factor. For example, the tea cup, jugs and bowls do not have shaped feet. The design, in its undecorated form is utilitarian and is not innovative in terms of addressing any practical aspects for example, space-saving concerns such as stackability.

II (iii) Fluted ornamental ware[47]



[47] Photograph showing page from *Wedgwood Shape Book no. 5*, courtesy of Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd. Neg .no. GL 5153 – 24.

Date designed and produced: These were not the first designs by Murray utilising the slip-cast method.[48] The fluted range was designed in 1935 and was launched to the public in 1936.[49] The shape numbers are consecutive so it was clearly commissioned as a distinct line.[50] All of the shapes were retained for production after the War.[51]

Material and stylistics: The fluted range of ornamental ware was made in earthenware by the slip-cast method and finished in either Moonstone or Green matt glazes. There were at least twenty different shapes, (for which individual plaster casts had to be modelled), including several bowls and vases as well as useful items such as ash trays, candlesticks, a tobacco jar, an ink stand, a denture set and a dessert service. The designs feature broad convex flutes on shapes that tend to be straight sided but flare slightly at the rim. Lidded items have a round, fluted finial and the lids are recessed so that the rims of jars (and the rims of open vessels such as bowls) have a slight scalloped effect. There is no applied decoration but some items were available in a more luxurious version with a platinum line detail on Moonstone (matt white).[52]

Price: The small vase (4127) cost approximately 5s 9d (28p) and the larger vase (4124) was approximately 14s.(70p) in 1936 both with matt glazed finish.[53]

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[48] His very first commission for Wedgwood in 1932 involved him with making designs for slip-cast serving dishes for the Annular service. In the following year he designed cigarette boxes, an astray and inkstands: (shape nos. 3871, 3872, 3881 and 3873) conceived as inexpensive home accessories.

[49] They were advertised in *PGGTR* in September 1936 and featured in a promotional brochure for Keith Murray and John Skeaping's designs c. 1936.

[50] Shape numbers 4107 – 4127 appear in *Wedgwood Shape Book no. 5*, (Wedgwood Museum)

[51] They are included in the section devoted to 'Keith Murray Designs (Matt Glazes)'alongside other thrown and turned designs by Murray in the *Catalogue of Bodies, Glazes and Shapes Current for 1940 – 1950,* Josiah Wedgwood and Sons (Wedgwood Museum)

[52] The moonstone and platinum version had a different sales number (C195). It was shown in 1936 promotional brochure, op. cit.

[53] Prices listed in catalogue: *Wedgwood, 1936 Exhibition,* 1936, p. 14 (NAL)

Comment: In Wedgwood's promotional material the new fluted designs were presented as discreet ranges of matching items for the bathroom and the study rather than as low-cost items for the home. They were available in the slightly more expensive matt glazes, which aesthetically placed them beyond being perceived as utilitarian designs. The fact that between 1936 and 1939 the sets were also available in a variant of Moonstone with a platinum line detail indicates that they could be considered as luxury products.

Conclusion to Case Study II

These examples have shown that within Murray's Modernist repertoire, there was also a category of design which, although it shares some of the features of the two aesthetic approaches discussed in Case Study I (i.e. Modernist interpretations of the traditional and 'machine aesthetic) is more utilitarian in character. Crucial to understanding the distinctions between them is recognition of the fundamental role that handicraft methods played in the realisation of Murray's formalist aesthetic.

The category of design discussed in this case study demonstrates that Murray was a competent designer of everyday things. In particular, it shows to what extent he experimented with mass production methods at Wedgwood to make well-designed home wares that were considerably cheaper than hand-made alternatives. Cognisance should be taken of the lower price range in which these goods were located because they also point up the relative expense of Murray's more formalist designs made by hand methods. In respect of their lower prices the slip cast designs were compatible with the social ambitions of the design reform movement. They are what DIA stalwart Lethaby might have described as 'fit for purpose' in terms of being well-designed 'everyday' wares of sound technical quality and reasonable price.

These pieces shared some of the aesthetic features of his more formalist designs: simple shapes, good proportions, no applied decoration. In those particular respects they were underpinned by the same design principles. Conversely, they lacked some of the more distinctive characteristics, most noticeably the crisp, geometric profiles and the precisely-spaced rings of incised ornament of his

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thrown and turned ceramics. It is apparent that Murray's more formalist approach lacked Read's characteristic 'vitality' when applied to the slip cast method. That is well-exemplified in the Commonwealth tea service which was produced under and for modernised mass production methods and designed by a team of designers and technical specialists. Yet the realised design lacks the formal perfection of other designs by Murray made principally by hand methods. Similarly, the slip cast mugs were not considered as aesthetically satisfactory as his thrown and turned beer mug. Yet in respect of the low cost of the slip cast mugs and the way that the design expressed the production method in an explicit manner (and thus obviated a finishing process), they represent, more than any other ceramics designed by Murray, a real engagement with principals of designing for mass production.

Case Study (III): Murray's designs for decorated glass.

This case study examines the range of applied decorative techniques available in the firm's decorating workshops that Murray utilised at Stevens & Williams. The examples are representative of the principal decorating techniques for which Murray made designs, namely wheel cutting, intaglio and copper wheel engraving. Also included is the less frequently used technique of enamel painting. The focus of analysis is on Murray's deployment of motifs and surface pattern. It looks at three main decorative approaches in Murray's oeuvre for glass: all-over patterns of abstract or stylised motifs; large centralised or repeating pictorial motifs and thematic pictorial motifs. For that reason it omits examples such as those with applied broad fluting and concentric bands of concave cutting consistent with Murray's interpretation of Modernist design as discussed and illustrated in Case Study I .[54]

Examples III :A (i – v) all over geometric pattern / abstract motif

III :A (i) Heavy cut crystal vases

III:A (ii) Bowl with intaglio-engraved pattern

III:A (iii) Engraved bowl

III:A (iv) Enamelled decanter

III:A (v) Enamelled decanter

[54] Nor does it include the sort of decorative effects such as trailing, casing and the use of contrasting coloured metals that would be generally undertaken in the glass house at the time when the object was formed. I am arguing that such pieces were compatible with Murray's more formalist approach in which decoration was subordinate to and determined by the formal qualities of the design.

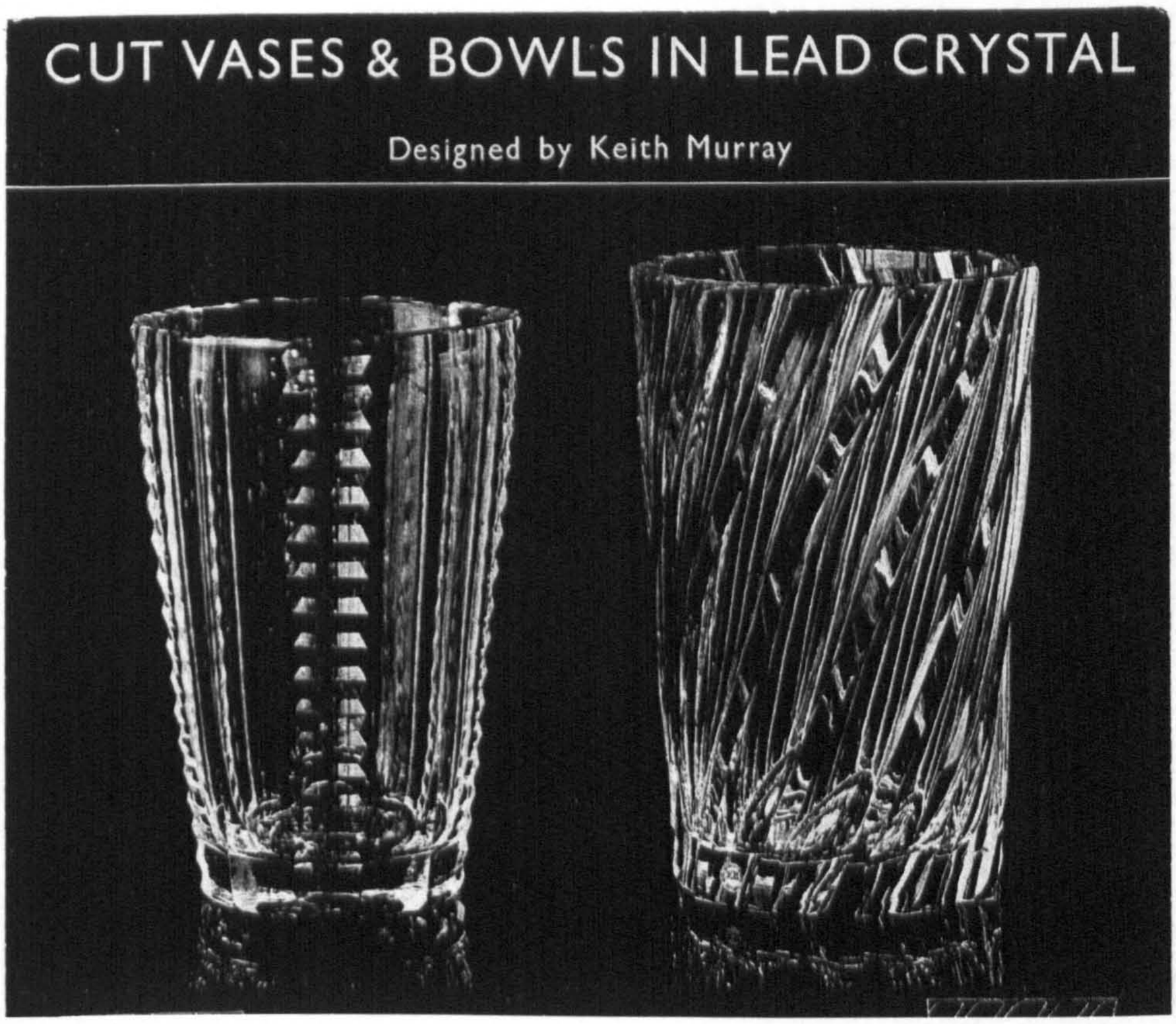
III : A (i) Heavy Cut Crystal Vases design no. 447A & 448A[55]

Date of design: c. 1934 - 1935

Material: Lead crystal,

Decorative method: Flat and mitre cutting (448A), and spiral fluting (447A)

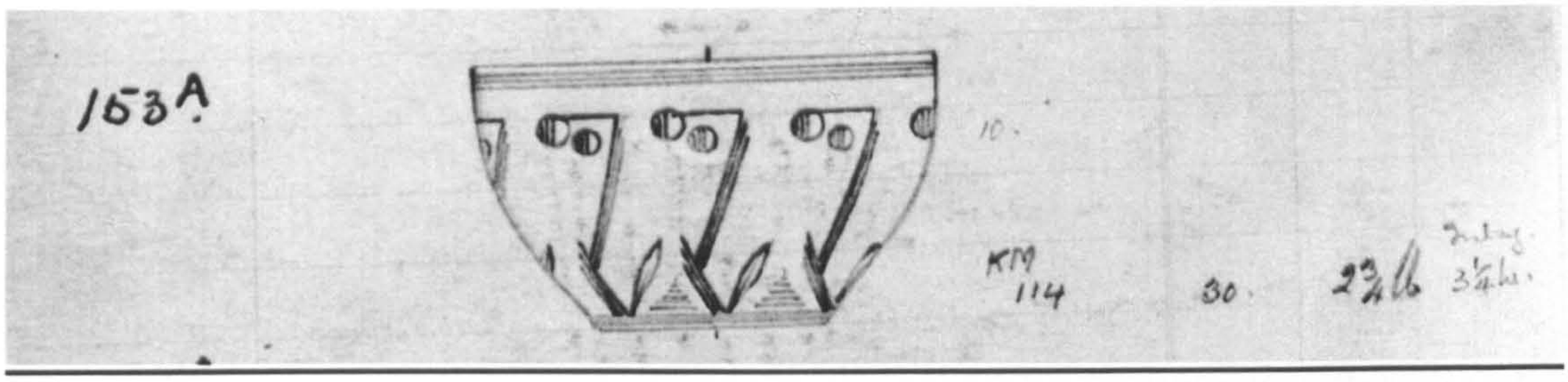
Decorative style: Broad fluted panels with panels of horizontal mitre cutting to every third panel, (448A). Broad fluted panels cut on spiral (447A).



Comment: The two vases in the photograph show how Murray experimented with flat cutting and deep mitre cutting to give an all-over decorated effect in keeping with the large rectilinear forms of the vases whilst maintaining the clarity of the thick, lead crystal glass.

[55] This illustration is taken from a promotional folder, *Brierley Crystal,* c. 1935 (Author's photograph)

III:A (ii) Bowl with Intaglio-engraved pattern design no, 153A[56]



Object: Large decorated bowl

Date of design: c. 1932 - 1933

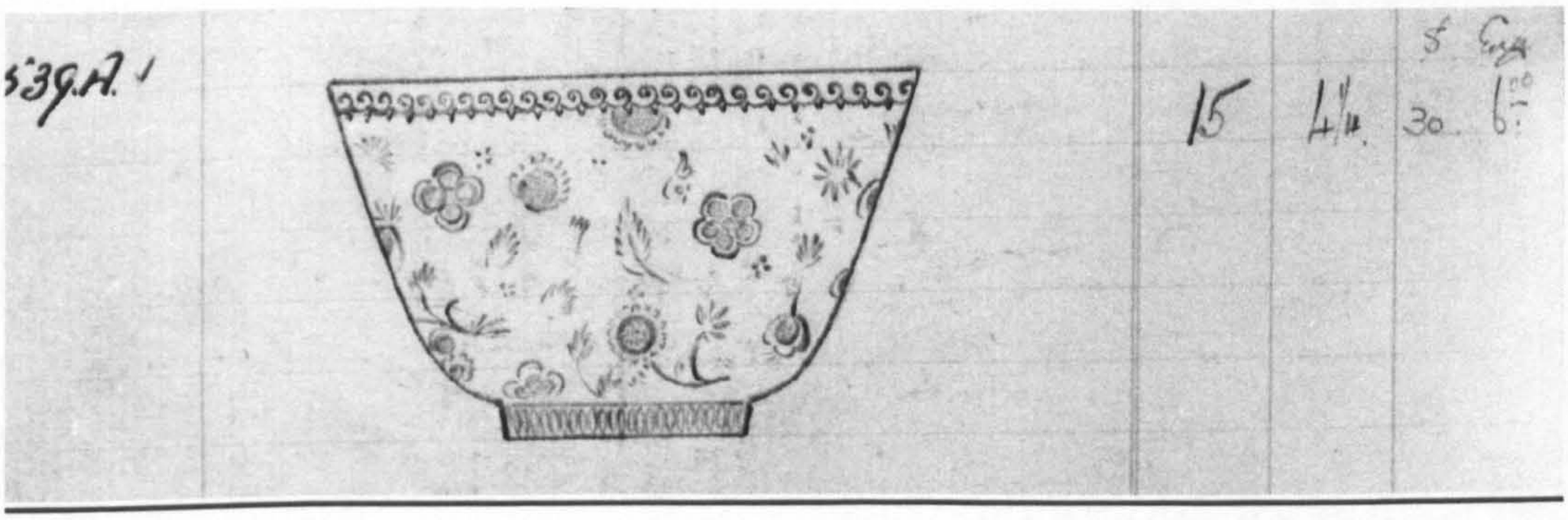
Material: Lead crystal weighing 2 _ lb with contracting black glass foot

Decorative method: Intaglio engraved and polished ('bright work' in glass making terms)

Decorative style: large regularly spaced and repeating pattern based on stylised semi - abstract flower motif

Comment: Intaglio cutting is a deeper form of engraving that gives a three-dimensional effect when executed on thick walled vessels and thus is well suited to lead crystal glass. Murray's patterns for intaglio cutting tend to be larger in scale and modernistic in style.

III:A (iii) Engraved Bowl design no. 539A[57]



[56] This illustration is taken from the *KMD Book* and was photographed by the author.

[57] This illustration is taken from the *KMD Book* and was photographed by the author.

Date of design: c. 1934 - 1935

Material: Heavy lead crystal (4 _ lb)

Decorative method: Shallow olive cutting around base, lightly engraved motifs over bowl and engraved running wave frieze around rim taking six hours to engrave.

Decorative style: All over abstracted floral motif with frieze pattern

Comment: The lightly engraved modern floral motif is highly reminiscent of Swedish designs of the period, especially as it is combined in this example with an engraved frieze pattern to the rim of the bowl.

III:A (iv) Enamelled Decanter, design no. 259A[58]

Object: Decanter and stopper, design no. 259A[59]

Date of design: c. 1933 - 1934

Material: coloured enamel (orange and black) on white (colourless) crystal

Decorative method: Enamel painting by hand taking 2 _ hours to complete.[60]

Decorative style: swirling abstract pattern.

Comment: The combination of the bold contrasting colours of orange and black influenced by the vogue for ancient Egyptian artefacts and the dynamic abstract pattern in shiny enamel is characteristic of the contemporary decorative

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[58] This illustration is taken from the *KMD Book* and was photographed by the author.

[59] This illustration is taken from the *KMD Book* and was photographed by the author.

[60] Indicated as 'gilding' in the *KMD Book* in the column headed 'Shop'. Enamel painting was probably done in the gilding workshop.

style 'Jazz Modern' (See Ch 1 for discussion of this stylistic variation). It is not known whether the design went into production or what it may have retailed at. There are very few designs like it although it is similar to a decanter (design no. 180A, c 1932 – 1933) illustrated in Chapter Three).

III:A (v) Enamel decanter design no. 264A[61]

Object: Square sectioned decanter and round stopper

Date of design: c. 1933 - 1934

Material: Lead crystal but weighing only 1 lb (therefore, given the indication that the decanter was 2 _ inches square in section it would be thin-walled) and with painted decoration.

Decorative method: Hand painted (probably with enamel paints (although only indicated as 'painting' in the 'shop' column of the entry in the *KMD Book*).

Decorative style: All over abstracted floral motif in a combination of subtle shades; black or grey, blue and green. The motif carried over onto the stopper and the decanter's pouring rim outlined in black.

Comment: There is no indication whether this design went into production. In terms of the principle aspects of its aesthetic: regular shape; slightness (i.e. thinness of vessel walls and lightness); modernistic abstract floral motif; delicate colours (i.e. subtle and not associated with the contemporary Art Deco design); this design is reminiscent of decorative Swedish designs of the 1920s.

Example III: B Large centralised or regularly spaced pictorial motif

Object: Bucket shaped vase with large cactus motif

Date of design: c. 1933 - 1934

Material: Lead crystal with contracting black glass foot

Decorative method: Engraved and left unpolished ('dull' in glass making terms).

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[61] This illustration is taken from the *KMD Book* and was photographed by the author.

Decorative style: large regularly spaced pictorial motif

Comment: This was one of several designs utilising a cactus motif (See Chapter Two for illustration and discussion of other examples). It fits in with a category of his decorative designs (mostly based on botanical themes, but some with birds and marine creatures) in which one or more large pictorial motif is deeply engraved onto the surface of the object.

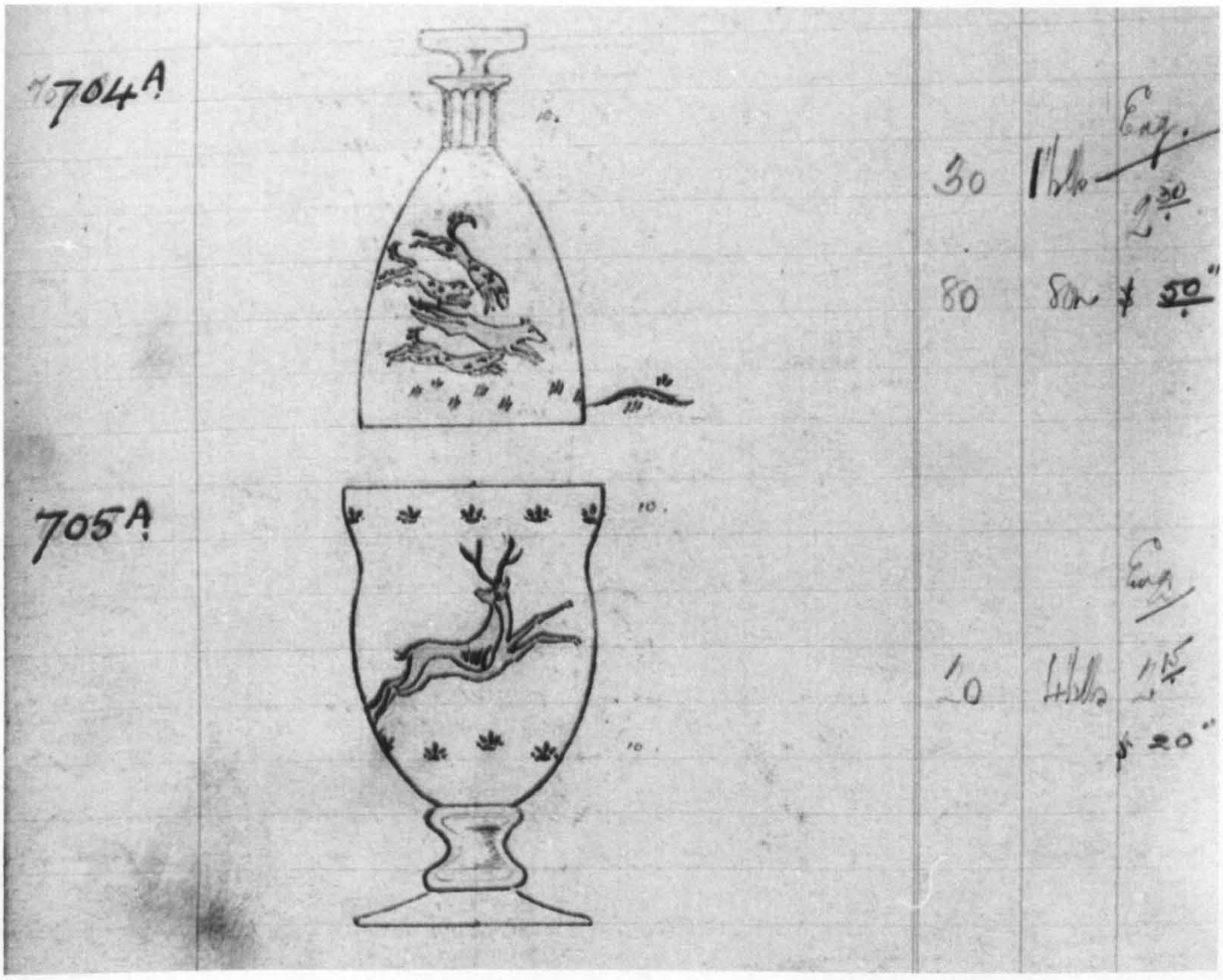
Examples III: C (i - ii) Thematic pictorial motifs

III: C (i) Engraved decanter and bowl

III: C (ii) Footed bowl with engraved aquatic design

III: C (iii) Engraved and Enamel Decanter

III: C (i) Engraved decanter design no. 704A and footed bowl no. 705A[62]



[62] This illustration is taken from the *KMD Book* and was photographed by the author.

Objects: Decanter with stopper and large footed bowl

Date of designs: c. 1936- 1937

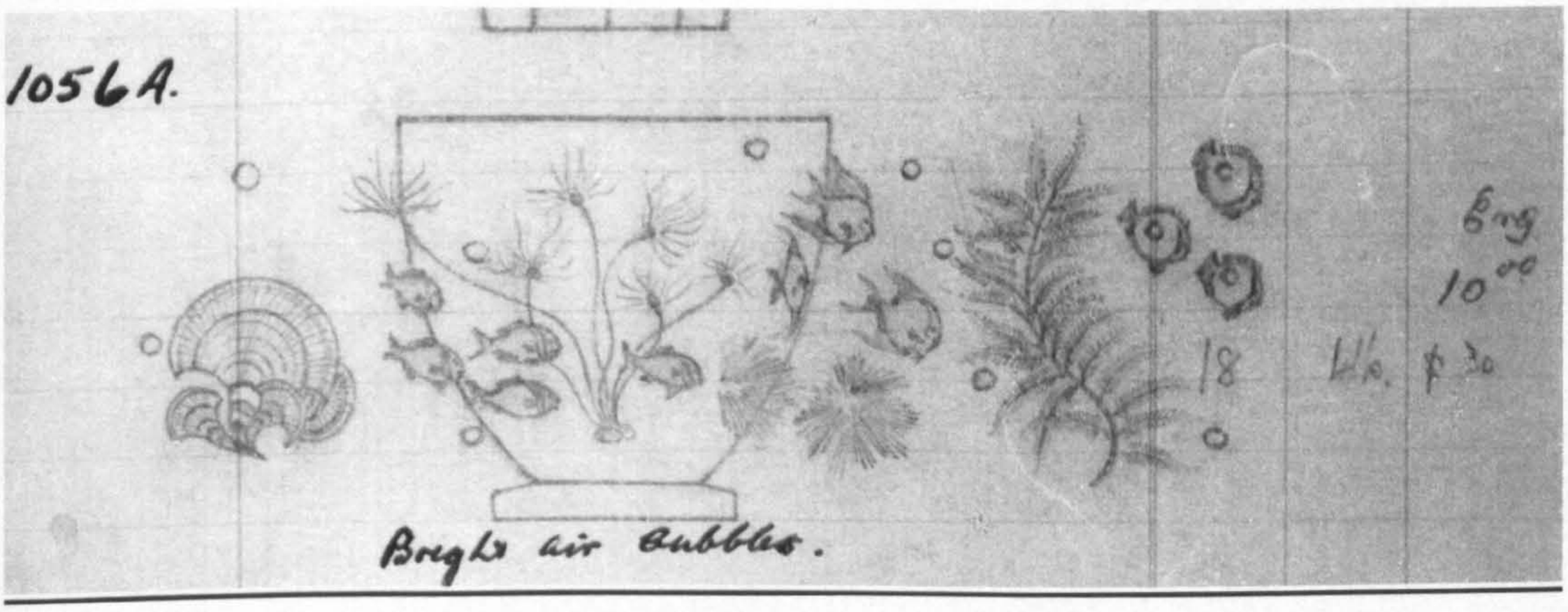
Material: Lead crystal (decanter 1 _ lbs, bowl 4 _ lbs)

Decorative method: Engraving and cutting. Engraved motifs taking 2 _ hours and 2 _ hours in the engraving shop respectively. Decanter has 10 hollow flutes around the neck and bowl has frieze of small motifs around base and rim, both of which were cut on the wheel.

Decorative style: Thematic pictorial motifs celebrating hunting (i.e fox and hounds and leaping stag). The bowl with stag motif could also fit under the rubric of the large singular pictorial motif.

Comment: The hunting theme of these pieces was unusual for Murray although a rival glass firm was selling cocktail sets (a fashionable item) decorated with enamelled scenes of fox hunting, so there may have been some popular interest in hunting (perhaps it was seen as a quintessentially English tradition). The decanter is based on an earlier design by Murray (design no. KM 384A c. 1933- 1934), which suggests that Murray may have been asked specifically to make some decorative designs on a hunting theme to try out on the market. It is not known whether they were made or if they were successful.

III: C (ii) Footed bowl with engraved design depicting aquatic scene, design no. 1056A[63]



[63] This illustration is taken from the *KMD Book* and was photographed by the author.

Date of design: c. 1938 - 1939

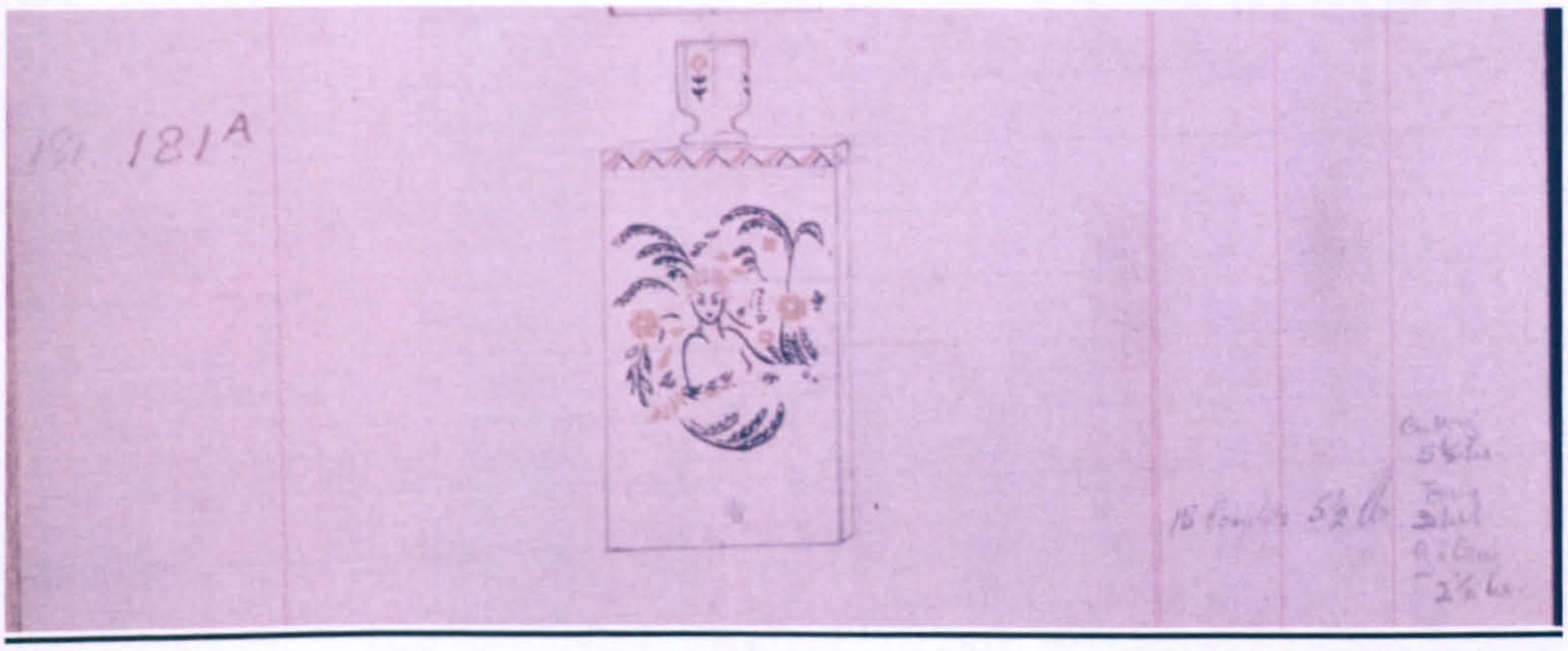
Material: Lead crystal weighing 4 lbs.

Decorative method: Engraved with bright cut air bubbles taking 10 hours to engrave.

Decorative style: Pictorial motif on the theme of aquaria or marine life. The lightly engraved individual motifs of fish, shells and aquatic flora are highly detailed and intricate.

Comment: This is an all-over design but one that is based on a pictorial scene rather than a pattern. It demanded a very high level of skill on the part of the engraver and could be compared with some of the best Swedish engraved glass of the period. However, unlike its Swedish counterparts it was engraved onto a more massive lead crystal blank.

III: C (iii) Engraved and Enamel Decanter and stopper design no. 181A[64]



Date of design: c. 1932 - 1933

Material: Lead crystal with black and gold enamel paint

Decorative method: Cutting 5 _ hours (to achieve the squared section and flat faces of the decanter); engraving 3 hours (to lightly engrave the pictorial motif and possibly also the zigzag frieze pattern at the top of the decanter; gilding 2 _ hours to lay colour over the engraved motif.

[64] This illustration is taken from the *KMD Book* and was photographed by the author.

Decorative style: Figurative pictorial motif on classical theme (possibly representing a nymph figure in a sylvan setting). The lightness of its decorative treatment of a classical theme is similar to the Swedish style of engraved neo-classical decoration evolved by Gate and Hald at Orrefors. The hand painted gold and black enamel detail gives a sophisticated and contemporary character to the decanter as does the emphatic rectilinearity of its form.

Comment: This is a complex decorative design not only because of its figurative pictorial decoration but also because it involves at least three decorative techniques in its execution. That level of artistry was not characteristic of any of Stevens & Williams' output in the inter-war period. Nor was it typical of Murray's approach to decorative glass, indeed it is a rare example of figurative work by him. Stylistically it may well have been influenced by engraved designs drawing on classical themes by contemporary Swedish glass artists. That is supported by the whimsical character of the design which is reminiscent of Hald's Modernist interpretation of classical themes in his pictorial designs for engraved glass.

Conclusion to Case Study III

In his writings about designing for the glass industry Murray explained why he extended his design repertoire from one that was strictly formalist to a more conventional approach that embraced pictorial motifs and surface pattern. It was evident from his writings that such an approach did not chime with his own interpretation of the role of designer for (modern) industry, (as analysed in Chapter Four). [65] The pragmatic arguments in support of applied patterns or motifs on lead crystal were predominantly related to the economic maintenance of a skilled work team of decorators and the tendency for lead crystal to have imperfections which could be disguised by judicious decoration, hence the broad range of decorative designs that featured in his output for Stevens & Williams. The challenge for Murray was to evolve a Modern approach to

[65] Indeed, it was in the realm of applied decoration that Murray's design for industry ethos was most challenged to such an extent that he became convinced that the sector of the glass industry in which he worked should change in line with his Modern Movement philosophy.

decorative design that was not fundamentally at odds with his formalist ethos. That put him under pressure because he did not have any training or background in decorative approaches to design, although he was an accomplished topographical artist. Nevertheless, the examples in this case study show that Murray was an able designer for patterns, pictorial motifs and thematic pictorial scenes for glass.

They also demonstrate Murray's ability to translate all three approaches across the range of decorating techniques available at Stevens & Williams. Furthermore, all of the examples of pictorial work that Murray made for glass indicate that his artistic ability was of a very high level, both with regards to his drawing skills and his artistic conception. Although he drew predominantly on flora and fauna for his pictorial motifs, his depictions were witty and urbane because the cactus plant and the aquarium especially, have associations with domesticity. Murray's engraved cactus vases arguably rank amongst the best British glass designs of the inter-war period because they combine 'modern' stylised decoration, excellent form and proportion, quality material and good craftsmanship yet it is ironic that they would not have married with his own concept of Modernist glass.

Chapter Five (cont). Study IV; Swedish Influence

Throughout this thesis and elsewhere, it has been argued that Swedish design was a significant influence on Murray's designs in all three media.

[66] This final case study further explores the theme of identifying and accounting for the influence of Swedish design of the 1920s and 1930s on Murray's interpretation of Modernist design for industry. It examines individual designs by Murray where a stylistic influence can be attributed to contemporary work by Swedish designers, firstly in metal then in glass and ceramics.

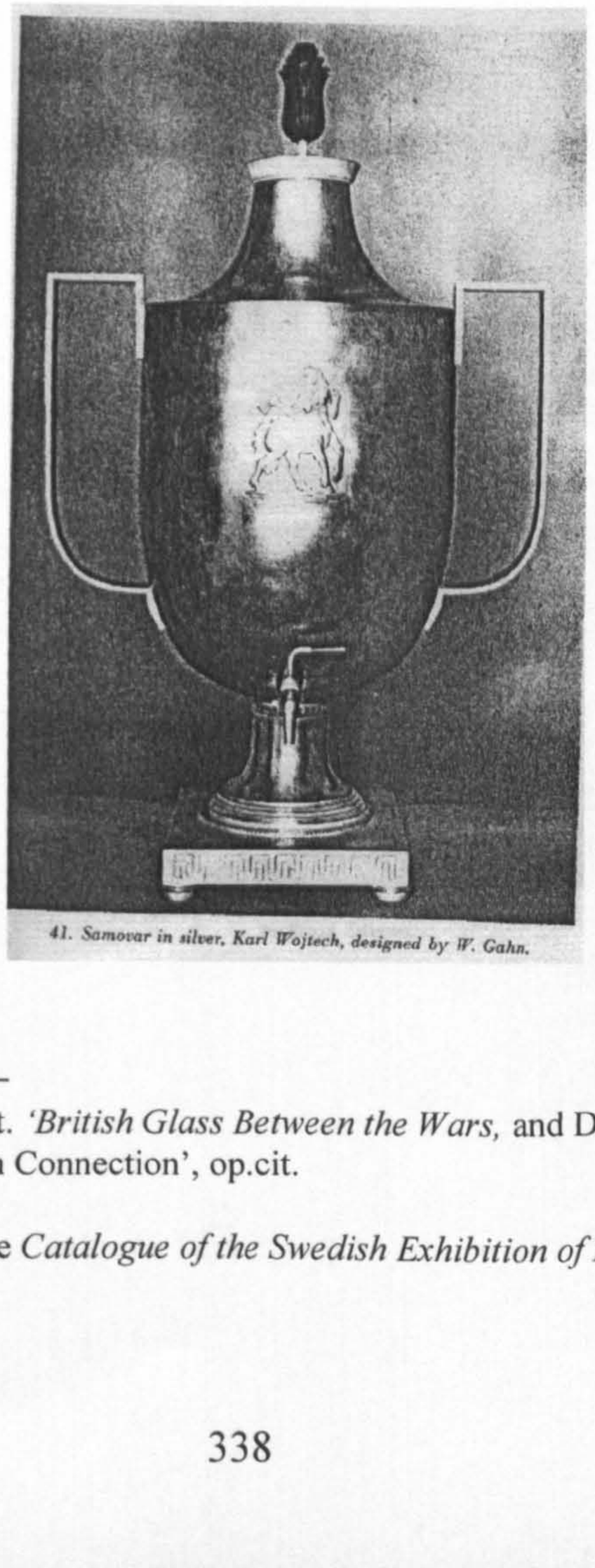
Examples IV:(i - iii), Metal

IV:(i) Swedish Silver Samovar designed by Ivar Johnssen, c. 1930

IV:(ii) Swedish Silver Cocktail set designed by H.R.H. Prince Sigvard

IV:(iii) Silver plate cocktail set and silver bowl designed by Murray, c.1934

IV:(i) Swedish Silver Samovar designed by Ivar Johnssen c. 1930 and manufactured by Kompaniet Walter Ghan.[67]



41. Samovar in silver, Karl Wojtech, designed by W. Gahn.

[66] See Diane Taylor, in op cit. *'British Glass Between the Wars,* and Diane Taylor, 'Keith Murray Glass – The Swedish Connection', op.cit.

[67] Illustration copied from the *Catalogue of the Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Art. London 1931,* plate 41.

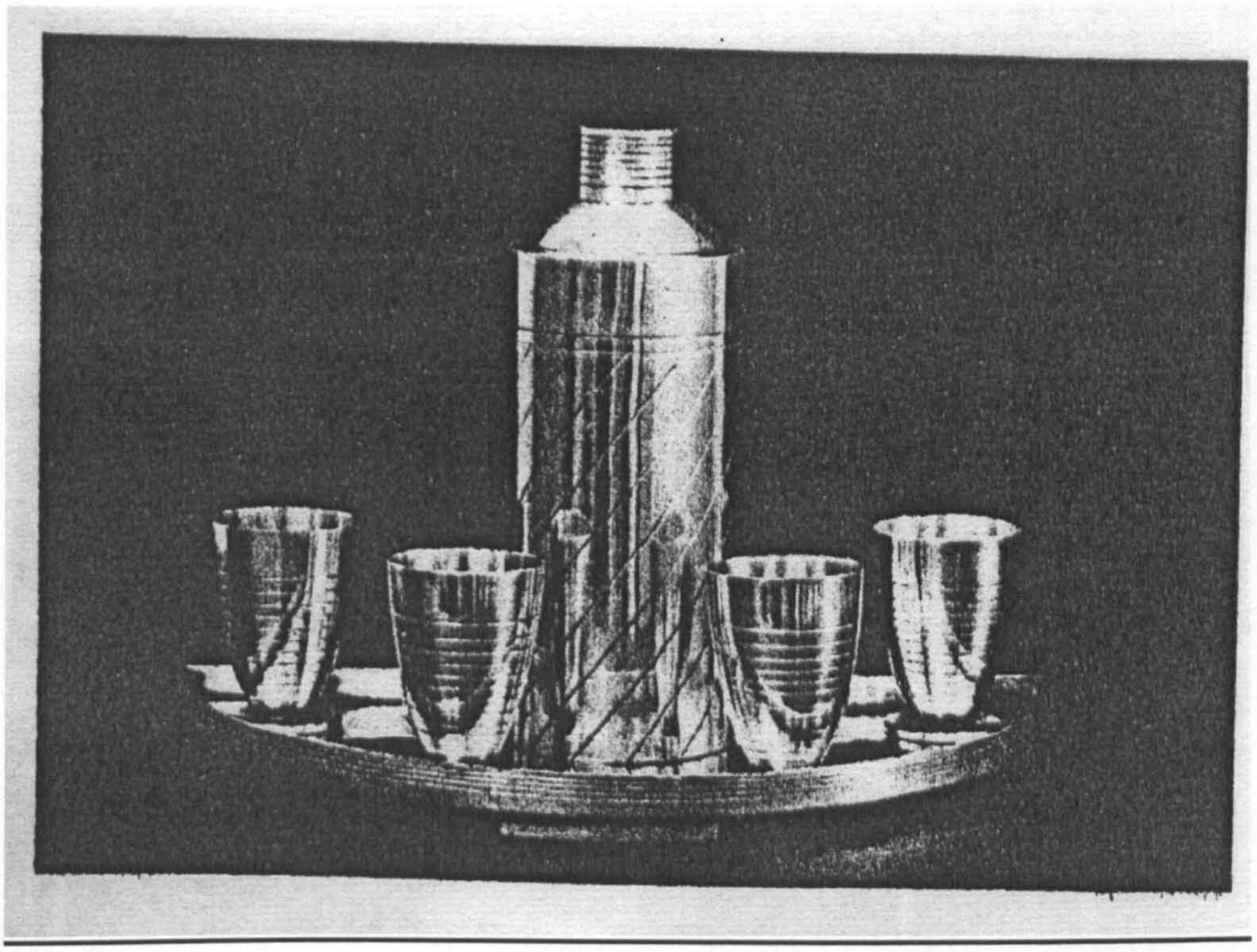
Design Details: This piece was designed and made before 1930 (as detailed below). Its inclusion in this set of examples is to show the prevailing 'stripped classical' style (sometimes called 'Swedish Grace') typical of silver design emanating from Sweden in the 1920s. The samovar is based on a classical vase form and has minimal classical details; notably the lotus flower finial and the Greek key frieze pattern engraved on its pedestal base. That theme is continued with the small centralised engraving of a satyr. The neo-classical elements are given a more contemporary inflection by means of the severe restraint of the whole design and also the simple, cast handles which are entirely unadorned.

Dissemination: This example was illustrated in the catalogue of the *Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Art*, held in London in 1931, indicating that it was on display when Murray visited the exhibition and, in that context, was presented as an exemplar of contemporary Swedish design, (hence the tentative dating of its date of manufacture 'made before 1931' above). Prior to the London exhibition it had been displayed at the *Stockholm Exhibition* in 1930 and was illustrated in the August 1930 issue of *Architectural Review*, which was dedicated to reporting on the exhibition.[68]

Comment: A previous case study in this chapter (**I:A vi**) examined a similar design by Murray for a silver trophy which combined an austere formalism with a pared-down classicism associated with Swedish design of the 1920s and early 1930s. Particularly notable for comparison is the similarity of the handles, which are cast into severe rectangular-sectioned shapes. Having established that Murray was familiar with contemporary examples of 'Swedish Grace' in silverwork it is likely that this particular samovar was part of the inspiration for Murray's Modernist version of neo-classical silver which he went on to design in the mid-1930s.

[68] See plate 3, in *Architectural Review*, August 1930, p 59.

IV:(ii) Swedish Silver Cocktail set designed by H.R.H. Prince Sigvard for A.B. Nordiska Kompaniet[69]



Design Details: This Swedish cocktail set was designed and made before 1931 and is included here to show that by the early 1930s a 'functionalist' style was starting to replace the stripped classicism associated with architecture and the decorative arts in Sweden.[70] In terms of its design, there is an emphasis on geometric form, especially in the straight sided cylindrical forms of the cocktail shaker and top. Decoration is highly restrained (as per the example of the Swedish samovar) but in this Modernist design, there are no classical references. The principal decorative treatments are the concentric lines engraved around the outer edge of the tray, the cups and the shaker top and the diagonal lines engraved around the cocktail shaker itself. In terms of stylistics it exemplifies the Swedish Modern idiom, (see Chapter Two for discussion of this term).

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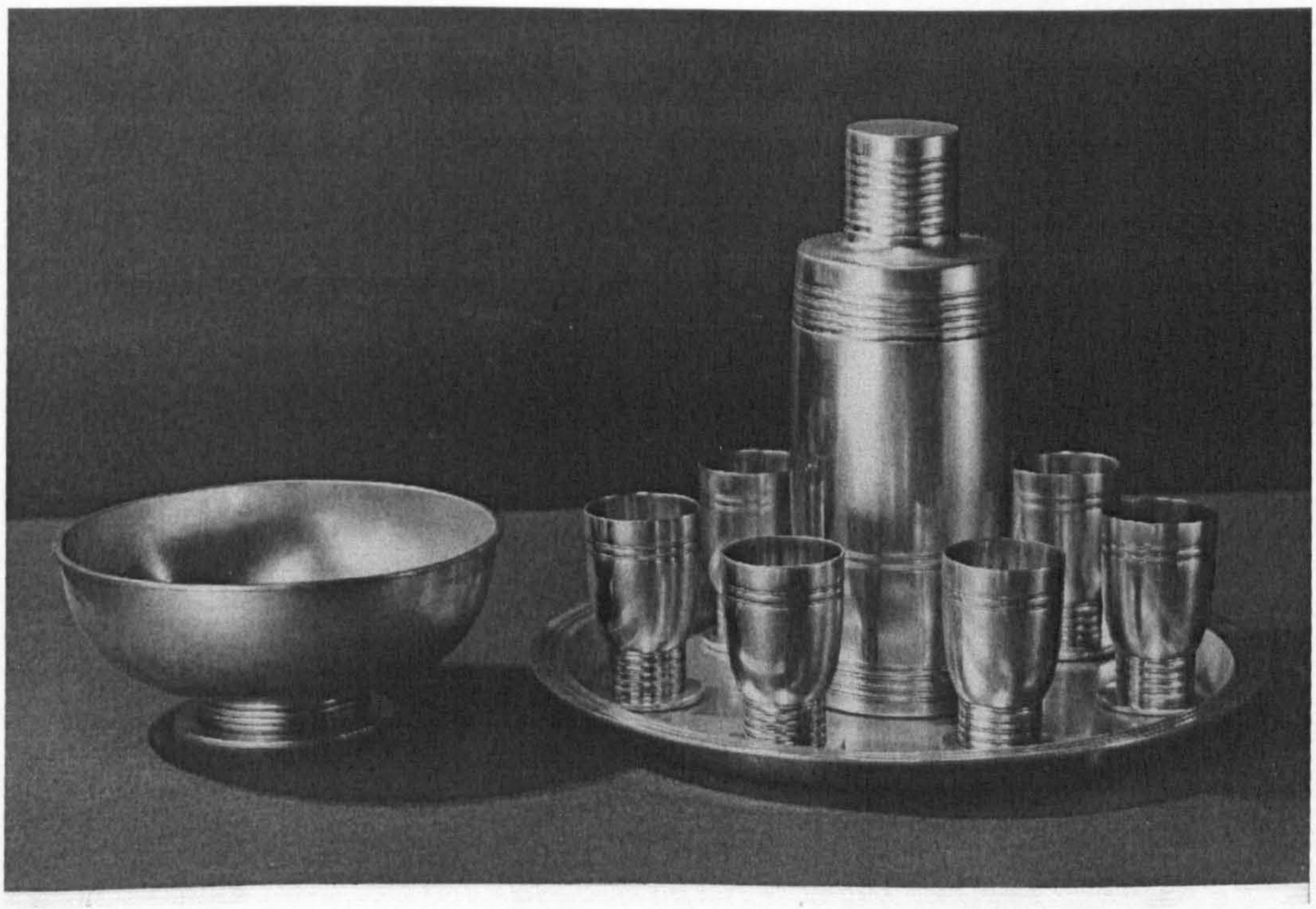
[69] Illustration copied from the *Catalogue of the Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Art. London 1931,* plate 33.

[70] In Chapter Two the significance of the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930, which served as a focus for the uptake of Modern Movement principles and ideas, was discussed.

Dissemination: This cocktail set was also illustrated in the catalogue of the *Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Art*, held in London in 1931, indicating that it was on display when Murray visited the exhibition.

Comment: It is interesting to note that when Murray visited the exhibition in 1931 he would have seen examples of both 'Swedish Grace' and 'Swedish Modern' idioms applied to silverwork on display representing exemplary Swedish Modern design. When Murray designed domestic silver for Mappin & Webb in c.1934, his range included his interpretations of both Swedish-style neo-classicism (as was shown in the previous example) and of the Swedish Modern idiom as discussed in the following example.

IV:(iii) Silver plate cocktail set and silver bowl designed by Keith Murray for Mappin & Webb, c. 1934.[71]



Design Details: These items were designed by Murray at the same time as the sports trophy and silver vase illustrated in previous case studies. They represent

[71] Photograph courtesy of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London.

his Modernist approach to designing in metal. The shapes are based on geometric forms, as for example, the cocktail cup, which has a flat circular foot, a cylindrical stem and a larger and slightly tapering cylindrical cup. Decoration is minimal and restricted to bands of engraved concentric rings.

Comment: Although Murray's designs for silver were in at least two distinct idioms they shared features such as austere form and highly restrained decoration which were fundamental to his Modernist approach to design. Furthermore, there was an underlying rational for his use of each of the two idioms in terms of basing his designs for trophies on a Modern version of neo-classical silver and his designs for 'modern' home accessories, such as the cocktail set, on his interpretation of Swedish Modern designs in silver. In that respects, each of the stylistic approaches were employed appropriately according to the type of item.

Examples IV:(iv - vii), Decorated glass, (engraved all-over patterns)

IV:(iv) Edward Hald's 'Strawberry Service', designed for Orrefors c.1920

IV:(v) Keith Murray bowl for Stevens & Williams, c. 1932 -3

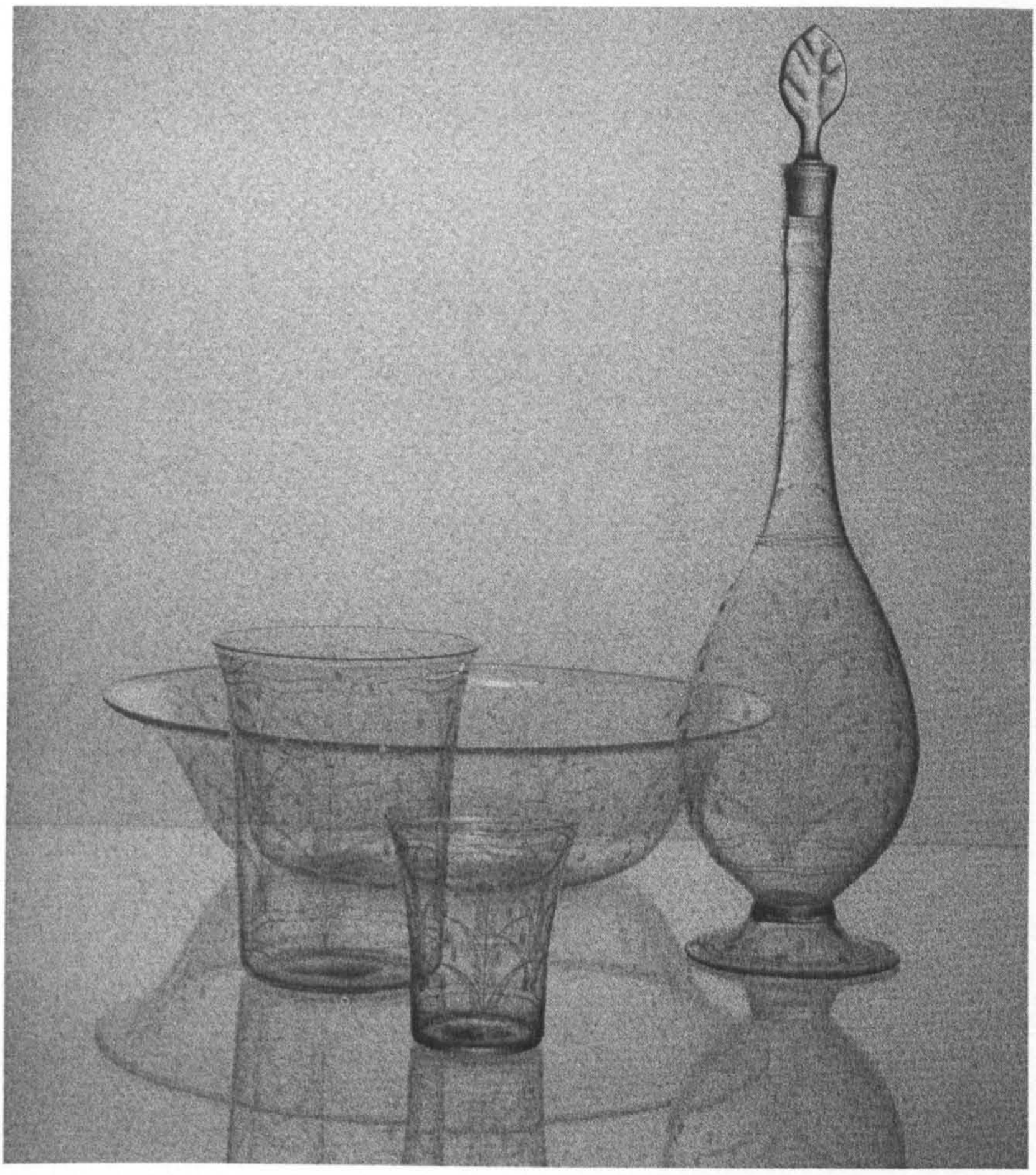
IV:(vi) Keith Murray bowl for Stevens & Williams, c. 1932 -3

IV:(vii) Keith Murray decanter for Stevens & Williams, c.1933 -4

IV:(iv) Edward Hald's 'Strawberry Service', designed for Orrefors c.1920[72]

Design and decorating method: A lightly engraved all-over pattern suited to bulk production and manufactured by Orrefors throughout the 1920s. It was available in another pattern designed by Hald called 'Night Sky' with an engraved star motif. Both of these motifs were associated with the National Romantic spirit which had pervaded Swedish architecture and the decorative arts after the turn of the twentieth century. (See discussion in Chapter Two, Part Two)

[72] Illustration from *Edward Hald: Malari, Konstindustripionjär,* (exhibition catalogue), Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 1983, p. 57.



IV:(iv)

Dissemination: Examples of different pieces from both the 'Night Sky' and 'Wild Strawberry' ranges are illustrated in the catalogue for the Swedish Pavilion at the 1925 Paris exhibition,[73] indicating that they were on display when Murray visited it that year.[74] A bowl with the 'Night Sky' pattern was illustrated in the DIA Yearbook of 1926-7 and captioned: 'Decorative Swedish glass which shows how ornament need never injure fitness'.[75] A covered jar engraved with the 'Night Sky;' pattern was illustrated in *Architectural Review*, in 1930.[76] It is also highly likely that examples from these ranges (or similar

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[73] Illustrated in the special catalogue for the Swedish Pavilion: *Suède: Guide Illustré,* Paris, 1925, p. 120.

[74] Murray mentioned his first encounter with Swedish glass during his visit to the *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, Paris 1925. See Keith Murray, 'The Design of Table Glass', op.cit. p. 53

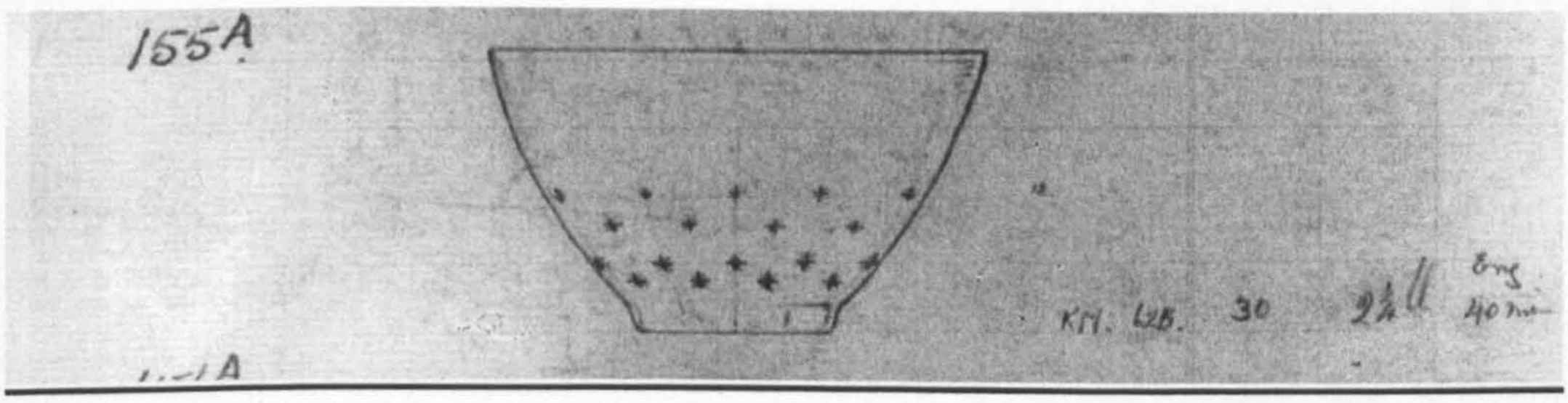
[75] *Design in Everyday Things,* 1926 , p. 100 (DIA / 20 – RIBA)

[76] See plate 3, in *Architectural Review,* August 1930, p 60.

items) were on display at the *Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Art*, held in London in 1931.

Comment: Examples of Murray's designs in this idiom discussed in a previous chapter showed that his designs were typically based on small motifs, such as flower or stars, often with an engraved border pattern of geometric motifs after the fashion of Gate and Hald. If Murray's choice of motif and style of engraving was derived from Swedish glass there were also substantial differences in his approach because the forms of Murray's pieces were both heavier and more severe in outline than the thinner and more fluid lines of Hald's designs as subsequent examples will show. It was argued in a previous case study that the Swedish style of very lightly engraved all-over pattern was the likely inspiration for Murray's designs for all-over patterns and motifs for engraved glass for which there was no precedence at Stevens & Williams.[77] However, by the time that Murray took up this style of engraving (c. 1932), Gate and Hald were no longer designing patterns inspired by National Romantic themes.[78] Orrefors' glass of the 1930s was more Modernist in its design approach as evidenced by the three examples of later work by Gate and Hald illustrated in Fig. 5: 2.

IV: (v) Keith Murray bowl for Stevens & Williams, design No. 155A, c. 1932 -3 [79]



[77] An example illustrated earlier in this chapter is design no: 539A, in Case Study **III: A (iii)**.

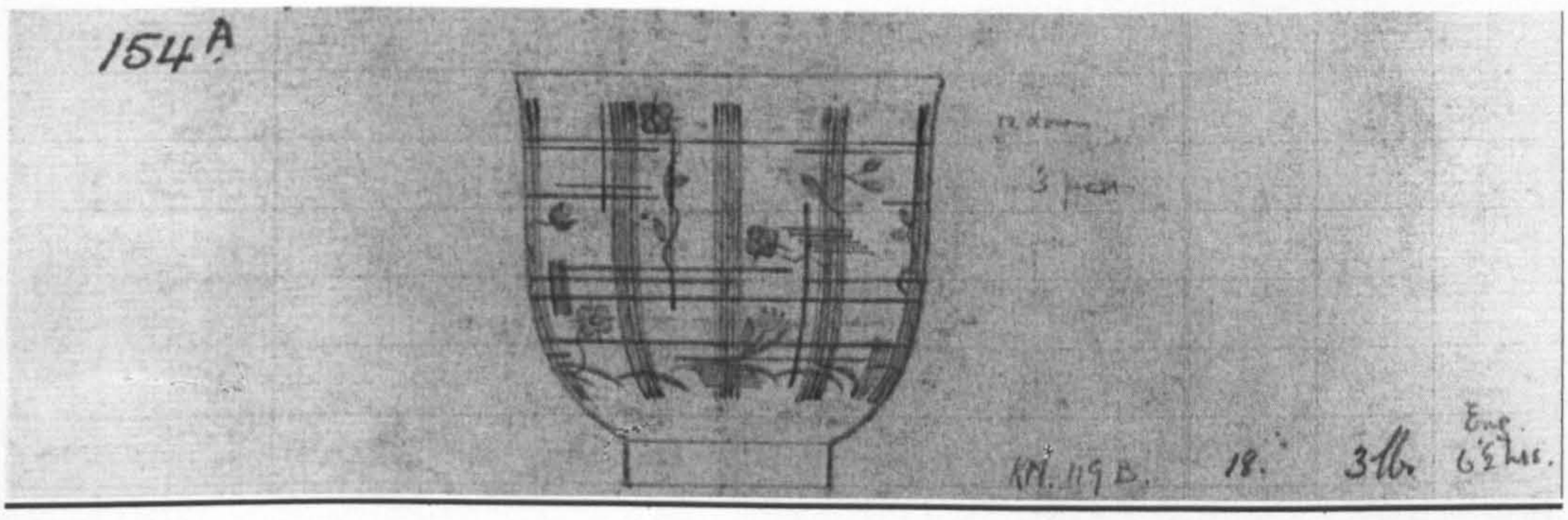
[78] By 1930, they were exploring a functionalist aesthetic approach that emphasised the translucent colours and ductile qualities of blown glass. That was also reflected in new and more abstract approaches to decoration, especially in modernist versions of the graal technique.

[79] Page from *KMD Book.* Author's photograph

Design and Decorating method: Design No. 155A has a lightly engraved star motif set out in four rows around the bottom half of the bowl.

Comment: This example is close in spirit to the Swedish examples of lightly engraved glass on several counts. Firstly, according to the details shown, the bowl itself weighs only 2 _ lbs so it was lighter and probably thinner than the example shown below it in the *KMD Book*. Secondly, as already established, the star pattern was considered to be a characteristically Swedish motif and was used extensively by Orrefors. Thirdly the lightness of the engraving and the simplicity of the design, which took only 40 minutes to engrave, implied that it could be decorated by moderately skilled engravers under bulk production conditions.

IV: (vi) Keith Murray bowl for Stevens & Williams, design No. 154A, c. 1932 -3[80]



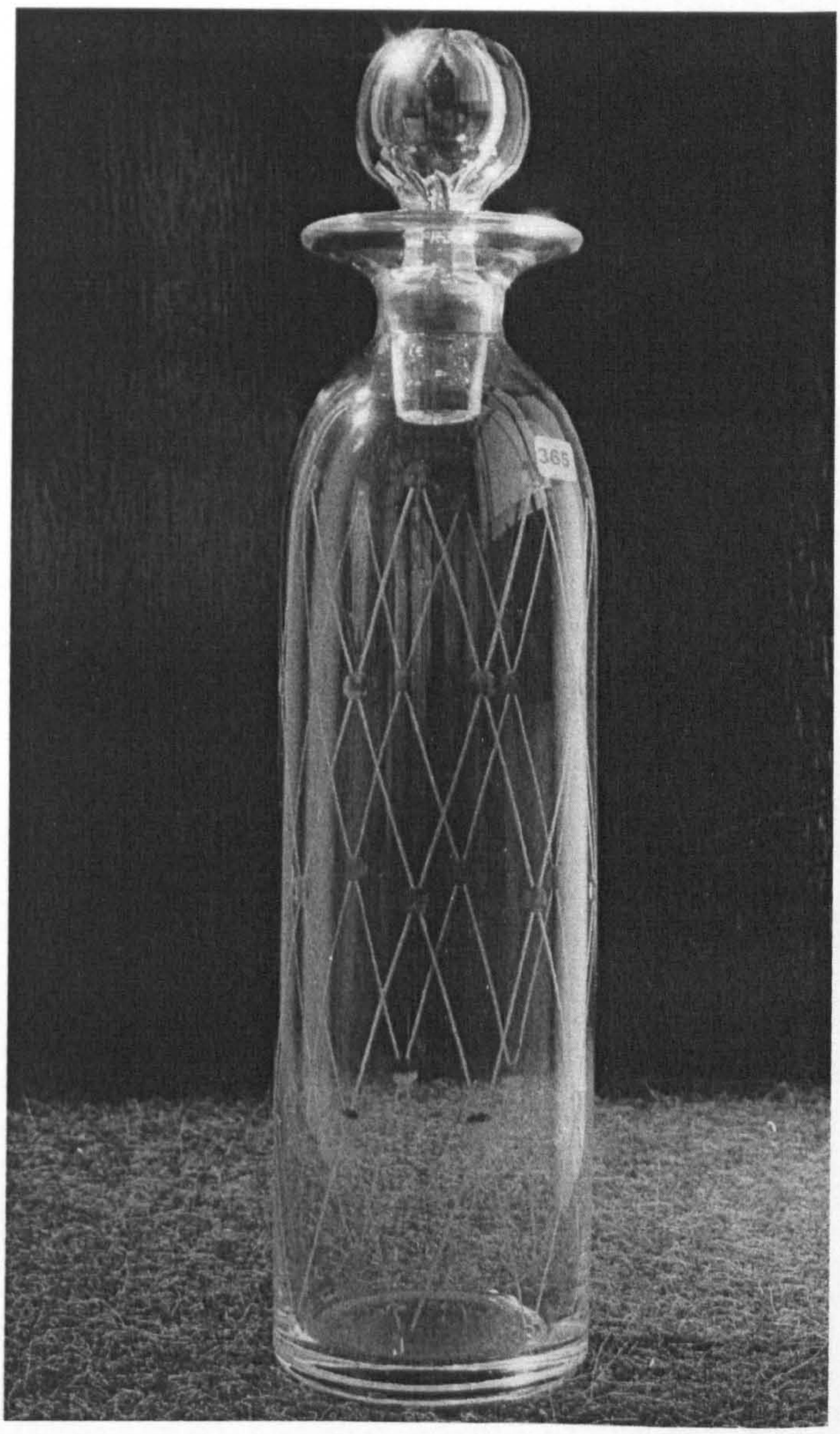
Design and decorating method: Bowl design no. 154A has a lightly engraved all over pattern combining stylised flower and geometric grid design on a heavy (3lb) bowl with deep, straight sides and a cylindrical foot.

Comment: The modernistic pattern is more complex than the Swedish example, as evidenced by the fact that it was expected to take 6 _ hours to engrave. It is therefore not in the same category as the 'Wild Strawberry' and 'Night Sky' patterns, which were designed to be easily engraved for general production. It

[80] Page from *KMD Book.* Author's photograph

does not have the engraved frieze pattern around its rim, which was a feature of many of the engraved pictorial designs associated with Hald and Gate from the 1920s. Being of lead crystal it is also heavier and therefore thicker than the Swedish engraved examples, made of soda glass, which produces thinner, harder vessels.[81]

IV:(vii) Keith Murray decanter for Stevens & Williams, design No. 352A c. 1933 -4[82]



[81] Glass made of soda is particularly suited to shallow engraving because the metal produces thin-walled but very hard vessels.

[82] Page from *KMD Book.* Author's photographs

Design and decorating method: Tall, straight-sided decanter with engraved diamond pattern interspersed with engraved 'beads' which are polished 'bright' in contrast to the linear pattern which is left unpolished (i.e.'dull').

Comment: The decanter was part of a matching table service in lead crystal and as such is an example of how Murray broke away from the conventions of cut and engraved lead crystal table services. In this case he simplified both the forms and the decoration in pursuit of Modernist expression. As with his star patterned bowl design No. 155A, the pattern on this decanter took relatively little time to execute (approximately one hour to engrave) and could have been undertaken by moderately skilled engravers, enabling it to be made in bulk production conditions.

Concluding comments re examples IV:(iv – vii)

All of the above examples show how Murray, following after the examples of Swedish glass designers, used all-over patterns to make simpler and more contemporary styles of decorated glass adaptable to fairly large runs of production. The decorative approach served a purpose because such patterns were useful in terms of disguising flaws in the glass; furthermore the small repeating motifs could be executed by less experienced glass engravers. In theory, these lighter designs enabled decorated glass of an artistic character to be made under bulk production conditions at prices that were lower than more elaborate conventional decorated glass ware. In practice, that was the case at Orrefors, where the 'Wild Strawberry' and 'Night Sky' patterns formed the basis of a lower priced engraved range (in relation to the pictorial engraved designs for which Hald and Gate were world-famous), which were in production at Orrefors for thirty years.[83]

Stevens & Williams did not take such a rational approach to production, as evidenced by the fact that Murray was required to make so many new designs every year rather than focus on developing specific ranges. The fact that he experimented with decorative techniques such as light engraving demonstrates

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[83] See' Katalog ', entry no. 98 in op. cit. *Edward Hald: Malari, Konstindustripionjär,* (no page numbers in catalogue section).

that he was sensitive to the problem of losses caused by blemishing encountered in lead crystal production. His simpler designs for engraved decoration show that he was concerned with designing for bulk production conditions even in the face of an evident lack of interest in this approach by his employers. If Swedish examples such as Hald's 'Wild Strawberry' and Night Sky' lines, were the inspiration for Murray's diamond-patterned table service then it is important to recognise the way that he adapted that approach to the heavier glass objects made from leaded metal and integrated it into his own Modernist interpretations of both form and pattern for glass.

Examples IV:(viii), Ceramics

IV: (viii) Ewald Dahlskog vases for Bo Fajans, design nos. D30, D7 and D65, c.1930[84]

Design Details: Dahlskog's earthenware vases were moulded (presumably by slip casting method) and finished with contrasting glazes or dark enamel over light glaze. Two of these examples are glazed in combinations of grey and blue and the vase in the centre was enamelled in black on a clear glazed cream coloured body. They manifest a 'functionalist' aesthetic especially in the formal

[84] This photograph copied from Jennifer Hawkins Opie, *Scandinavian Ceramics and Glass in the Twentieth Century,* Exhibition Catalogue, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1989, p 108.

elements which tend towards the geometric and also in the repetitive horizontal bands picked out in contrasting colours.

Dissemination: Examples from this range were on display at the *Swedish Exhibition* in London in 1931.[85] A similar vase by Dahlskog was illustrated in *Modern Swedish Decorative Arts*, published in Britain by the Architectural Press in 1931.[86]

Comment: Dahlskog's Modern ceramics were first shown to the public at the *Stockholm Exhibition* of 1930. Their showing in London the following year demonstrates how some of the most advanced examples of Swedish Modern design became known so soon after their inception. Murray never wrote specifically about designing ceramics so we do not know if he was inspired by ceramic designs from other countries (as was the case with Swedish Glass). However, at least three aspects of the Dahlskog pots bear comparisons with examples of Murray's designs for Wedgwood discussed in previous case studies. Firstly the use of geometric forms or straight-sided forms as seen in examples **I: B (ii)** (Vase no 3765 designed c 1933) and **I: B (vi)** (Vases nos. 415, 416, 417 designed c. 1937). A second feature is the ribbed profile effect which Murray's rounded vase has in common with Dahlskog's designs nos. D.30 and D 67 and the third is his use of contrasting coloured glazes and surface colours.[87] That may well have been the inspiration for Murray's designs using two-coloured slip glazes (as in the examples cited above), especially as both designers achieve a Modern effect by contrasting horizontal bands of coloured slip.

Although significant areas of overlap between Murray's plain ornamental designs and these vases by Dahlskog have been identified, they principally concern aesthetics rather than techniques or methods. A fundamental difference was that Murray's designs that share Dahlskog's Modernist aesthetic were

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[85] Op. cit. *Catalogue of the Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Art*

[86] Dr Nils Wollin's *Modern Swedish Decorative Arts*, Architectural Press, London, 1931.

[87] Dahlskog did not restrict himself to using contrasting glazes or slips but as in the example D70 he used black enamel over a glazed light coloured earthenware.

largely made by the traditional artisanal method of throwing and turning whereas their Swedish counterparts were cast in moulds. A second difference with regards to some of Murray's two-tone wares was that he achieved a contrasting coloured effect by cutting through the top layer of slip to reveal the first colour underneath whereas Dahlskog achieved his contrasting bands by applying alternating coloured glazes or painting on bands of dark coloured enamel.

Conclusion to case Study IV

Through the use of individual examples this case study has shown how aspects of contemporary Swedish design influenced individual examples of Murray's designs in silver, glass and ceramics. The results are indicative of what I am hypothesising was a major influence on his design because a finite study of all the possible variations of stylistic influence on Murray's work is beyond the scope of this thesis.[88] I have argued elsewhere that Murray integrated characteristic aspects of Swedish glass into his own Modernist versions.[89] This case study has substantiated that hypothesis and at the same time proved that Murray was no mere copyist of Swedish designs. The comparative analysis of both his work and the Swedish examples that were the likely inspiration has shown that he adapted design styles or approaches to make them more suited to either the material or the process of production in the firms for which he worked.

Analysis of the examples in this case study has also indicated that Murray was particularly drawn to examples of Swedish factory-made ceramics and glass because he approved of Swedish precepts about designing for industry.[90] The democratising ethos of Swedish design reform movement had encouraged

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[88] Elsewhere in this thesis it is implied that other designs by Murray were similarly influenced by Modern Swedish design and decoration; (principally in his use of contrasting coloured glass and his style of decoration for tableware).

[89] See Diane Taylor , *Accounting for Influence,* op.cit.

[90] Murray had been tracking Swedish glass design since 1925 and the examples he saw in the early 1930s in London must have demonstrated to him that Swedish design was undergoing a further transformation as designers such as Hald and Gate experimented with functionalist approaches inspired by Modern Movement architecture and design.

designers and manufacturers to pay attention to cheaper and middle-priced wares. By the early 1930s that legacy was apparent in numerous examples of simple, elegant design with restrained decoration that could be manufactured easily and consequently cost less than more elaborate and conventional styles. Thus, the examples of Swedish ceramics, glass and metal which he saw at the Swedish Exhibition in 1931, were not only a source of aesthetic inspiration but embodied a philosophy of design for the Modern Age on which he shaped his approach to designing for British manufacturing firms.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine Keith Murray's design methodology and practice as a freelance designer for industry (c. 1932 – 1940) and to critically evaluate his significance as a British designer of the inter-war period. It has proceeded from the recognition of distortions and biases in written accounts that have unproblematically evaluated Murray's work as a designer within a predominantly Modernist critical framework. It has identified pivotal positions in the Modernist spectrum which justifies its focus on one designer's work and supports a more complex conceptualisation of the Modern Movement in design as a set of ideas advancing progressive or 'non-traditional' design. Indeed it has demonstrated that there were variations relating to how Modernism itself was interpreted and promulgated both within the spectrum of design reform interests and also in the commercial field.

Critical analysis of key texts (including exhibitions) pertaining to his designs in three media has established that Murray's status as a significant Modernist designer for industry was perpetuated over at least four decades (i.e. from the 1930s and into the 1980s) within the over-arching framework and subjected to the orthodox account of the Modern Movement in twentieth century British design . Detailed analysis of primary sources of the 1930s, including Murray's own writings, has shown that the historical representation of Murray was shaped by, and in its turn supported the Modernist orthodoxy of the singular heroic or 'pioneer' designer. Furthermore it has revealed and re-evaluated the extent to which assumptions about mechanised production methods (and the parallel myth of mass production) underpinned much of the critical commentary about designing for industry design in the inter-war period.

The study has exposed specific inconsistencies in the critical accounts or appraisals of Murray's work as a designer by leading Modernist commentators especially Nikolaus Pevsner, Maxwell Fry and Herbert Read. Analysis of those primary sources has identified an indeterminate consensus as to whether and to

what extent Murray was an exemplary Modernist. That exposition has confirmed that the leading proponents of a Modern Movement in design in Britain embraced a range of positions which renders problematic the conceptualisation of Modernist design as a singular precept. For example, Pevsner's interpretation and assessment of the Modern Movement in British design was informed by his empirical study which evaluated the uptake of Modernist approaches to design in English manufacturing industries partly in terms of comparisons with what he deemed to be international exemplars.[1] His version of Modernism embraced both Swedish Modernist and Bauhaus examples and located Murray's work in relation to both, yet from Fry's perspective those approaches were mutually exclusive. Fry distinguished between those two strands of progressive design which he later argued constituted the Modern Movement in design in the 1930s: one that was a continuum of the Arts & Crafts Movement infused with Swedish Modernist influences and another more advanced strand inspired by the functionalist ideology of the Bauhaus.[2] It was the latter strand to which he subscribed, but on the evidence of Murray's designs he did not believe that he had shared his more radically Modernist ideals. When Read admired Murray's thrown and turned ceramics, it was in recognition of his ability to endow traditional pottery items with abstract form, rather than his aptitude to design for modern production methods. Murray was evidently the type of 'abstract artist' that Read was theorising would transform the material environment in the machine age.[3] Thus it has demonstrated how critical evaluations of Murray's work as a designer for industry were, almost without exception, based on the aesthetic preferences and/or philosophical ideals of writers and commentators rather than any detailed knowledge of the actualities of production in the particular sectors of British manufacturing industry in which Murray was employed. Yet, this thesis and

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[1] Nikolaus Pevsner, op. cit. *Industrial Art in England.*

[2] Maxwell Fry, personal correspondence, 1985.

[3] Herbert Read, op.cit. *Art & Industry,* pp. 33 -35.

other studies of British design in the inter-war period have established that there was a substantial public discourse about the designer's role in industry and the need to design for machine production, hence the detailed analysis of those discourses in Chapters One and Four.

Accounting for and unravelling the various ideological and institutional strands that constituted 'progressive' design during the inter-war years (see Chapter One) has identified certain broadly shared ideals and approaches. All of these emphasise the importance of design for industry and the designer's role in translating democratising ideals or commercial strategies into the processes of production. What have emerged from that historical analysis of public and institutional design discourse are frames of reference pertaining to design reform from both commercial and philosophical perspectives. A key theme that shaped progressive outlooks towards design was *designing for industry*, a discursive concept that had a social dimension in terms of advocating better design standards for everyday goods as well as its pragmatic commercial counterpart which advocated good design as a tool for selling.[4] Another prevailing theme was that of *democratising design* whether through a) improving public taste and inculcating criteria for 'good' design; or b) expounding the design philosophy of other countries, especially Sweden, which was judged to have a more advanced and programmatic approach to designing and manufacturing goods for its population as a whole rather than for privileged social groups, or c) by promoting designs that were simpler in concept and therefore less expensive to manufacture than conventional products. This study has shown how identifying and evaluating all of these agendas is vital in order firstly to conceptualise and secondly to critically interrogate the discursive context of Murray's praxis as a designer for industry designs in the 1930s.

[4] Both were DIA positions influenced by the aims and ideals of the Deutsche Werkbund.

Through reconstructing that discursive context, the timeliness of Murray's entry into the industrial design profession can be better understood as a more critical factor in the historical account than was hitherto supposed. The received version is that Murray turned to design as a secondary career because of the slump that affected building in the 1930s. A more informed interpretation made possible through contextualisation is that Murray turned to design, rather than to alternative forms of employment, because he had engaged with issues of design reform and had been thinking about how they could be applied to certain types of manufactured goods for at least six or seven years prior to him practising as a designer. Furthermore, in the many cultural contexts in which design was discussed, written about or exhibited, the perception of the designer as a significant figure in the pursuit of progressive ideals had emerged. That interpretation provides an explanation, for example, as to why Murray, a designer of only five years standing, was one of the very first to be awarded the honour of (Royal) Designer for Industry. This case study of Murray's career as a designer is consequently more cogniscent of the historical and discursive context out of which a different and more dynamic role for the designer for industry was conceived, shaped and put into practice than the somewhat phenomenological accounts that have preceded this study.

The examination of Murray's writing about design in Chapter Four of this thesis provides evidence that that he pursued a Modernist agenda from the outset in terms of giving 'modern expression' to manufactured goods. It has shown that the industrial design methodology he espoused in his writings was predicated upon the manufacturing process as the governing factor for design; an approach that demonstrated his commitment to rationalist principles of design. However, the detailed analysis of many of Murray's designs in all three media undertaken in Chapter Five found that Murray's design approach was dominated by his uncompromising pursuit of a formalist aesthetic (as discussed below). His subsequent writing about the role of the designer in industry has revealed that

his ideas about designing for industry became more radical as he was confronted with the out-datedness of the methods of manufacture and approaches to design he encountered, especially in the glass firm for which he worked. What became evident from a critical analysis of his Modernist discourse about design and the role of the designer in industry was that, in common with many Modern Movement advocates, he envisaged the design process taking place in modern industries geared to mass production of standardised goods. His writings indicate the extent to which those Modernist ideals were compromised in at least one of the firms for which he worked where production was geared to traditional handicraft methods of making and decorating.

Key to understanding his sense of failure with regard to putting into practice a design methodology underpinned by the philosophical aims of the Modern Movement is the detailed examination undertaken of Murray's working relationship with his two principal employers, Stevens & Williams Ltd. (see Chapter Two) and Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. (see Chapter Three). These chapters are set out as separate studies because it was important to evaluate the specific conditions that Murray encountered at both firms relative to the sectors of the different industries in which they were located. They draw upon a diverse range of primary sources including economic data relating to the performance of both the ceramics and glass industries c. 1926 – 1939, documents and pattern books in the business archives of both firms and interviews with persons connected with the individual firms at or around the time that Murray was designing for them. Thus these two chapters have enabled a far greater understanding of Murray's experience as a freelance designer working in more than one industry than was hitherto possible. As discrete historical case studies they are valuable accounts which illuminate the actualities of designing for specific British manufacturing firms during a period in which manufacturers increasingly turned to design as one of several strategies to beat the world recession. In the context of this thesis, the comparison of Murray's experience at the two firms enabled a greater understanding of the difficulties encountered by the new type of non-specialist designer, whose design methodology was

hypothetically transferable across different media, across different types of company and across different industries.

In particular those insights have enabled an analysis of how designing for industry was implemented and managed by the firms and the ways in which the concept was strategically utilised from promotional and marketing perspectives. By undertaking detailed analysis of marketing and promotional material produced by the two firms it has been possible to track the emergence of new conceptualisations of domestic products as 'designer accessories' for the home and a concomitant address which helped to shape consumers' attitudes to buying co-ordinating items from 'designer' ranges. That micro-study has revealed a parallel discourse in which Modernist design was promulgated in terms of an emergent culture of consumption. By shedding light on a hitherto unexplored aspect of the historical account it also demonstrates the limitations of Modernist critical discourse in terms of its focus on the designer and his/her creations.

The comparative approach revealed fundamental differences encountered by Murray at each of the firms and informed my understanding of the many extraneous factors, both material and attitudinal, that made it difficult to modernise product lines and production methods. Its ultimate value in fulfilling the aims of this thesis was in challenging poorly-defined or inconsistent interpretations of the term 'industrial design' which did not a) consider the designer's role in relation to the specific setting in which his work is undertaken and realised; b) consider the collaborative environment in which the designer works nor c) probe the problems of designing in more than one industry. In that respect, this detailed and contextualised case study of one designer's work in three media not only supports Sparke's argument that a theorised methodology for industrial design did not emerge out of the critical discourse about designing for industry in the inter-war period in Britain, but it also reveals the difficulties

encountered by British designers in developing and implementing a programmatic industrial design methodology based on Modern Movement precepts.

Case studies of Murray's work in three media (see Chapter Five) have allowed for the concepts and approaches that he espoused to be examined against actual designs. For example, Murray argued that design should be process-led, a proposition that accorded with rationalist principles, yet analysis of his designs revealed that he strove persistently for aesthetic effects which disguised the honest expression of manufacturing processes where the object relied on traditional hand methods of production. In recognising inconsistencies between theory and practice an alternative framework emerged which has enabled a rigorous analysis of Murray's approaches to designing for industry that reflects his engagement with and interpretation of a broad spectrum of ideas and influences pertaining to progressive design.

Comparative analysis of examples has shown that Murray pursued the objective of a Modernist interpretation of form across the three media and in doing so achieved a distinctive homogenising aesthetic that has variously been described as 'clean cut', 'architectonic' and 'machine aesthetic'. The close analysis of examples in Case Study I: B reflecting Murray's most severely Modernist ('machine') aesthetic has confirmed that it in all cases it was achieved through hand methods. It has demonstrated how shared characteristics including precise, geometrically-inspired shapes, blemishless surface finish and discreet, mechanistic decoration detracted from differences between both materials and methods employed in pursuit of that aesthetic effect and in particular disguised the organic qualities associated with hand crafted and hand finished artefacts.

A further case study (II) has argued that when he employed a genuine mass production method for ceramics his slip-cast designs failed to achieve the formal perfection associated with his 'machine aesthetic' designs. The distinctions between the typological examples in the two case studies discussed here reveal Murray's immersion in what Banham theorised was the central paradox of avant-garde architecture and design in the (First) Machine Age. He identified on the one hand, the pursuit of ideal forms for the products of the Machine Age and on the other, the evolution of new forms appropriate to the ethos and methods associated with mass production.[5] Banham was describing dichotomous approaches and philosophies embraced by groups and movements associated with non-traditional design however this examination of Murray's designs has proved that he incorporated both approaches into his designs for ceramics; one that was typified by a severe and often geometricised aesthetic and the other which reflected a rational response to utility and technics.

Crucial to understanding why Murray adapted both approaches for ceramics (and how he used them discriminately) is to look at his formalist designs in glass and metal because in both of those cases, he was working for firms which employed only artisan methods. In those circumstances, where there was no opportunity for Murray to experiment with mass production methods, his abstract aesthetic approach was the more 'appropriate' to fulfil his aim of bringing 'modern expression' to traditional forms. It is argued that Murray's Modernist aesthetic symbolised a philosophical rupture with traditional styling in the absence of more practical means to support experimentation with progressive approaches to design.

The recognition in this study that Murray's designs for decorative glass were underplayed not only by himself, but also by contemporary Modernist critics

[5] Reyner Banham, op.cit. *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age.*

demanded attention because it demonstrates the fundamental bias towards form as a critical index of Modernist design.[6] An exploration of his decorative oeuvre in Case Study III revealed the creative range in terms of patterns, motifs and pictorial effects with which he experimented in order to develop contemporary styles appropriate to traditional glass-decorating techniques. It has found that in whatever style he worked, Murray applied the aesthetic in a sensitive and consistent manner. However, his frustration with designing for decoration was evident in his writings about design; a position that reflected his interpretation of the industrial designer's role as one who was essentially a giver of form.

At one extreme of his decorative spectrum Murray developed an approach to ornament that was entirely consistent with Read's ideas that ornamentation for industrially made goods should be determined by formal consideration and should also have an appropriate machine quality.[7] Many of Murray's plain bowls and vases designed for Wedgwood are the embodiment of that ideal, as evidenced by Read's public endorsement of Murray's designs for Wedgwood. Indeed, where turning was used to add horizontal ribbed effects to globe shaped objects (as in the example illustrated in Case Study I:B) analysis has recognised in the blurring of the distinctions between form-making and ornamentation, a type of ornament to which Read assigned the term 'plastic'.[8] Not all of Murray's work in the decorative idiom met those high ideals because as was shown in Case Study III, Murray was expected to work in the conventional manner of a freelance artist-designer producing many applied designs for pattern and motif.

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[6] In that respect, the highly selective treatment of Murray's work which tended to overlook or ignore his decorative work can be paralleled with the scant attention paid to those designers, especially women, whose work did not fit the Pevsnarian rubric, such as Clarice Cliff, Millicent Taplin and Laura Knight whose work was deemed to be decorative.

[7] Herbert Read, op.cit. *Art and Industry,* pp.121 – 123

[8] 'Plastic ornament' according to Read was '...not so much "applied" to the object, but is the object itself.' Ibid, p.119

Analysis of the particular circumstance that Murray found himself in at Stevens & Williams has clarified why and how he drew inspiration from the work of other glass artists, especially the decorative designs of Simon Gate and Edward Hald at Orrefors. Case Study IV has verified the extent to which Murray was familiar with certain aspects of Swedish design and cogniscent of the Swedish design reform ethos. Analysis of individual examples of his designs in ceramics, glass and silver which are typified by a prevailing Swedish influence has produced empirical evidence of how certain Swedish designs were stylistically influential. Furthermore, it has demonstrated how Murray drew upon the design philosophy which underpinned them to inform and develop his own design methodology.

That case study (and other discussion in this thesis, especially in Chapter One) is important in terms of substantiating and critiquing the received idea of 'Swedish influence' which informed many of the accounts of Murray's design work (including his own). It recognises that, although it was not a myth, the complex nature of Swedish design and design reform was itself distorted by partial understanding and misconceptions, which this thesis aimed to set out and critically assess. Taken together the four case studies reflect different approaches to design (formalist, rationalist, decorative, art for industry), which Murray explored and attempted to reconcile in developing his Modernist approach to design.

This study has drawn on the strengths of the monographic approach which allows for a focussed and detailed analysis. That singular focus facilitated a highly contextualised study of this important British designer of the inter-war period which was especially necessary in order to fulfil its ambitious central aim. That was to account for and assess the historical significance of Murray's work and his role as a designer in a way that allowed for a synchronic mapping and critique of the over-arching Modernist critical framework which has pervaded important accounts and assessments (including Murray's own).

Although it acknowledges that the established but fragmented canon was indeed the starting point for the research its aim was to critique the historical and critical frameworks rather than to validate Murray's iconic status as a leading designer for industry and /or that of the objects associated with his name. The empirical monographic approach has produced an implicit narrative of endeavour and compromise as it recounts Murray's efforts and achievements in reconciling theory and practice in the craft-based industries in which he worked. So, at one level, it has tended to re-produce the figure of the 'pioneer' Modernist designer that the hypothesis of this study challenged. However, in line with its principal aim a more complex contextualised critical framework has been established, which, for the purpose of analysis, conceptualises and discursively objectifies Murray's praxis as a designer. Through this case study, design historians will be able to study the practical and philosophical challenges encountered by both designer and manufacturing firms as they attempted to grapple with the demands of modernising out put and production in light manufacturing industries in Britain in the inter-war period.

Certain themes have emerged out of this study which either connect to recent developments in design history approaches or which suggest new frames of reference for future studies. Of the latter category, this study invites a more substantial examination by historians of how and why examples of progressive Swedish architecture and design were so effectively propagandised and influential outside of Sweden and especially in Britain in the inter-war period. Central to that is a more rigorous critique of the myth of Swedish Modern design which has evolved and become self-perpetuating largely because of the dual nationalist and Modernist frameworks which have dominated twentieth century Swedish design history.

This thesis invites links to work by other historians relating to the concept of 'designer' ranges of domestic products. Analysis of promotional material for this study has demonstrated that various discourses about designed artefacts and design in the home were articulated in commercial literature of the inter-war period. A historical study which examines how positive consumer attitudes were inculcated with reference to 'designer' ranges and co-ordinated designs for the

home through advertising and public relations media is envisaged. Such an empirical study would provide the historical background for a further study which would engage critically with issues of branding, totemic appeal and propositional address to consumers in the context of marketing 'designer' wares particularly in the last quarter of the 20th century.

With reference to the final evaluation of the present study it is important to reflect upon the considerable archive material sought out and researched in its preparation, especially that pertaining to business archives. The reader will have noted that there has been considerable dispersal of the archives of glass manufacturing firms in Britain in the last two decades. It is likely that other manufacturing businesses' archives will be dissipated as Britain (and other Western countries) becomes more economically entrenched in the post-industrial era. Thus this thesis will serve as a repository for key information about the contents and locations of some of those archives during a time of flux. Other aspects of its primary research, principally interviews with industry specialists will also assume deeper significance for industrial and social historians as well as design historians as the British manufacturing base continues to contract.

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Appendix I

Biographical details

Appendix I

Keith Murray 1892-1981: A Brief Biography

Early Years and Training

1892	Born Keith Day Pearce Murray in Auckland, New Zealand
1906	Emigrated to Britain with his parents
1906-1907	Studied at Mill Hill School, London
1910-1915	Returned to New Zealand to work as an articled pupil (and later, draughtsman) in the architectural practise of Wilson & Moody in Auckland, New Zealand
1915-1919	Served in Royal Flying Corps, earning a Military Cross and the Croix de Guerre, Belge.
1919-1921	Studied at the Architectural Association School, London.
1921	Graduated and made Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects
1923-1925	Taught at the Architectural Association School, London
1920s	Worked in the offices of Maxwell Ayrton (Simpson & Ayrton), who designed Wembley Stadium in association with Owen Williams
1928	Public exhibition of Murray's topographical sketches: *Drawings of Spain*, Lefevre Galleries, London

Design and architectural practice in the 1930s

c.1932	Began to work for Stevens & Williams as a freelance designer
c.1932	Worked as a freelance designer for Wedgwood

1933	Awarded Gold Medal for ceramic design at the fifth Triennale in Milan
c.1934	Undertook single design commission for Mappin & Webb
1935	*Keith Murray* exhibition in ceramics, metal and glass, Medici Galleries, London
1936	Architectural partnership with C.S. White, FIBA. Murray & White commissioned to design new Wedgwood factory at Barlaston
1936	Tour of Europe and North America with Tom Wedgwood and Norman Wilson to study modern factory design
1936	Awarded Designer for Industry distinction,(became Royal Designer for Industry in 1938
c.1940 -5	Served in the R.A.F in an administrative role based in London

<u>Post World War Two</u>

Design activities:

1946-1948	Final design commission to develop the 'Commonwealth' table service for Wedgwood
1945	Murray elected master of the R.D.I Faculty
1948	Murray's design work for the 'Commonwealth' service featured in a display about industrial design in the *Design at Work* exhibition organised by the RSA and Council of Industrial Design.
1948-1952	Murray elected President of the Faculty of R.D.I s
1976	V&A mounts a small retrospective exhibition: *Keith Murray,* featuring his designs in three media

Architectural practice:

c.1945	Architectural practise expanded in partnership with New Zealand architect, Basil Ward and becomes Ramsey, Murray, Ward and White
c.1952	Ramsey, Murray, Ward and White designed concrete hangars for London Airport (client B.E.A). Other commissions include air terminal, Hong Kong and airport at Brunai
c.1960	Murray, Ward and Partners (as the partnership continues to be known to date) design a Micro-Biology Unit at Oxford University.
1972	Murray, Ward and Partners design additional B.E.A servicing hangar, Heathrow, London.
1971	Murray Retires
1982	Deceased

Appendix II

Sources and locations of archives

Details of archives, primary sources and locations of archives/ reference material (where there have been changes of circumstance)

This study has identified and consulted a broad range of primary material relating to or supplementing the study of:

- Keith Murray and his work
- Designs by competing firms and/or other Modernist designers
- Design and design reform issues in the inter-war period
- Swedish design (especially glass) in the inter-war period

What follows is:

1. An account of some of the principal business archives consulted for this study that documents details and whereabouts of key and supplementary reference material especially pertaining to Keith Murray and his work.
2. An account of primary sources in Sweden, especially pertaining to Swedish Modern glass and ceramics

1.

Mappin & Webb Ltd.

This study has been affected by the earlier loss of business records particularly with regard to details of Murray's designs in silver and silver plate for the Royal Silversmiths, Mappin & Webb.[1] Nevertheless the firm retained some material relevant to this study as I was able to see a copy of part of an illustrated promotional catalogue for Mappin and Webb Ltd.c. 1937. The extract entitled: 'Some beautiful applications of BRITISH INDUSTRIAL DESIGNING [sic] (c. 1937) was sent to me in response to my correspondence with Mappin & Webb's head office in London, 1983 – 1985. The extract has illustrations and details (including retail prices) of ten designs for domestic items and trophies attributable by me (but not attributed in this catalogue) to Keith Murray.

Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd

The Wedgwood Trust archive pertaining to this period includes correspondence between Murray and members of the firm, travellers' notes, promotional brochures and exhibition catalogues.

Information about Murray's designs in the firm's shape books is supplemented by other records relating to patterns, engraving, modelling, and general notes.[2]

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[1] The firm was taken over by Garrard and in the process Mappin & Webb's records were lost.

[2] The factory note book with entries dating from 12th July 1935 to 23rd August 1937 details the origination of new designs and the introduction of new or amended backstamp details.

Note that pattern books, engraving books, modelling books and other factory documentation are distinct from Shape Books (see Thesis 'Introduction' for details of the latter).

- All of the designs which Murray made for Wedgwood can be found in the volumes of Shape Books (c. 1932 - c. 1960) which contain numbered outline drawings of all new designs and amendments to existing ones. These factory books indicate which designs were in production over the two or three years that each volume was current. From these, the dates of origination of Murray's designs and the length of time they remained in production can be calculated.[3]

- Pattern books reference new ornamental patterns (painted or printed) for china and earthenware (usually tableware rather than ornaments).

- The *Engraving Book, 12th Oct. 1927* details the dates when designs for printed tableware patterns by Murray were put out for estimate. It also shows the designs for the Keith Murray facsimile signature backstamp and the later KM monogram backstamp and so indicate when they were introduced (and aid the dating of ceramic items attributed to Keith Murray.)[4]

- The firm's *Modelling Book* dating from 1927, indicate that Murray made some designs that employed bulk if not mass production manufacturing techniques. Modelling books also references applied ornament (such as modelled cameos) and component parts such as special handles and lids that were moulded and applied to hand-made ware.[5]

- The Trust's museum holds an important collection of ceramic items made by Wedgwood and dating from the eighteenth century. This collection includes several items designed by Murray including a

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[3] There are two volumes of shape books that reference Murray's new designs. *Shape book no. 4* has designs by Murray made (i.e. prepared for production) before the end of January 1935. *Shape Book no. 5* continues with designs made from Feb.1st 1935 to the end of 1939. It was superseded by the printed *Catalogue for Bodies, Glazes and Shapes Current for 1940 - 1950,* J. Wedgwood and Sons, 1947.

[4] There is reference to Murray's decorative designs in the firm's *Engraving Book, 12th Oct. 1927,* (date refers to the start date of the book). These entries relate to estimates for printing costs for applied patterns between March and September 1934 for new patterns: 'Weeping Willow'; 'Green Tree'; 'Iris'; 'Pink Flower' and 'Pimpernel'. A printed facsimile signature backstamp (Keith Murray) was introduced in 1933 and a printed monogram mark (K.M.) in 1934. The latter was updated in 1940 when the words '...of Etruria and Barlaston' were added to the monogram design.

[5] The firm's *Modelling Book* includes items designed by Murray including drawings for '...two new vegetable dishes...' , (from the Annular range but not specified as such), dated 3rd Oct. 1932; '...handles and spouts to thrown and turned K.M. coffee pot, box, cream, coffee cups...', dated 27th Feb 1933; '...K.M. inkstand – for casting...', dated 4th Nov. 1935

Moonstone coffee set, several bowls and vases with matt glazes and a number of pieces in *Black Basalt.*[6] Museum pieces are recorded photographically in the archive. The photographic archive contains negatives and prints of documents and artefacts pertaining to Murray's work for the firm including advertising and promotional literature and the two architectural drawings for the Barlaston Headquarter buildings

These items and others cited in the thesis can be consulted at the firm's headquarters at Barlaston, (near Stoke on Trent), Staffs.

Stevens & Williams Ltd

I was fortunate to work on this important archive before its dispersal in 1998 and was able to take photographs of documents and objects. The most important primary resource for Murray's glass designs (the firm's *Keith Murray Description Book)* is discussed in the thesis. Suffice it to state here that it can be consulted at Broadfield House Glass Museum, Kingswinford, West Midlands. I was able to examine and take photographs of those pieces attributed to Keith Murray formerly kept and displayed in the firm's Honeybourne House museum.[7]

The firm's archive also contained a folder of 33 sketches and full-scale working drawings for designs (some dated) and which are either signed by or attributed to Murray. Other items relating to Murray included contemporary promotional material (with details of retail prices) and a file about the Keith Murray Glass, compiled by Reginald Williams-Thomas, aptly titled *Keith Murray, an Underrated Designer.*[8] The whereabouts of all of these is not known

Other Glass factories in the Stourbridge area

Sadly, traditional hand-made glass is in decline in Britain and many firms have closed or been taken over by larger concerns. The demise of these firms has been accompanied by a scandalous neglect and dispersal of unique historical documentation. Museums with important glass collections and those with local glass-making connections have, and still are, making every effort to acquire material and to keep archive collections together.[9] Those endeavours are not

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[6] Artefacts by Murray in the collection includes an earthenware vase with a Matt Green glaze, (design no. 3765) designed c 1933; an earthenware beer set (design no. 3810), designed c 1933 and a two-handled urn-shaped vase in two-tone slipware (design no. 4225) designed c 1937.

[7] Before its dispersal the firm's collection contained ten items of glass attributed to Keith Murray. The glass collection including all the Keith Murray glass and important pieces of nineteenth century art glass was sold by public auction at Sotheby's, London in March 1998.

[8] The fact that so much material pertaining to Murray's work for the firm was collated and conserved in its museum and archive indicates the importance attached to this unique venture by the Williams-Thomas family and certain employees, especially Sam Thompson who was the curator following his retirement until the closure of the Museum.

[9] The Broadfield House Glass Museum (being both a specialist glass museum and a local authority- funded museum has probably played the most important role in conserving (or at least tracking the dispersal of) business archives and associated glass collections.

always straightforward because whilst new owners have little interest in acquiring and/or conserving old letters, accounts and transactions they are keen to maintain the rights to old designs and therefore some have retained original pattern books.[10]

Thomas Webb Ltd

The Stourbridge firm of Thomas Webb was a useful source for this study because, as did Royal Brierley Crystal, it maintained a collection of the firm's designs dating from the 19th century and an archive collection including pattern books from the inter-war period. The museum was cared for by former employee, Stan Eveson, who provided much information about the state of modernisation of its manufacturing techniques at the firm (and its co-factory, Deema Glass of Chesterfield) in the 1930s.

Of particular interest in the Thomas Webb archive were pattern books dating from 1932 when the Swedish glass maker, Sven Fogelberg was appointed General Manager. Fogelberg and his designer wife, Anna Grunkvist introduced Modernist approaches to the firm's more traditional design repertory. The Fogelbergs originally worked for the Swedish glass firm, Kosta, so it was especially useful in terms of accounting for and evaluating the impact of a Swedish approach to glass design on a British manufacturer. (See footnote 10 for current location of archive material)

Stuart Crystal

The firm kept its pattern books and records from the 1930s. These featured the work of its Art Director, Ludwig Kny, a British designer craftsman, who developed a modernistic style of decoration from the late 1920s onwards. That material was useful to evaluate the extent to which one of Steven & Williams nearest rivals was committed to modernising its designs.

In the context of evaluating progressive approaches to design, the portfolio of correspondence, sketches and designs arising out of the so-called 'Foley Experiment' were of special interest. It was a collaborative project involving leading British artists and manufacturers of glass and ceramics (Stuart Crystal and potters, Brain & Co), organised on behalf of the London department store, Harrods.[11] Designs by the eight artists involved in the glass aspect of the project

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[10] A typical case (pertaining to one of the firm's collections and archives cited and discussed above) is that of Thomas Webb, formerly was one of the oldest independent glass firms in the Stourbridge area. It was taken over by the Coloroll Group in 1986 and its archive and collection dispersed or sold. Much of the nineteenth century collection, including fine examples of cameo-cutting have been removed to the parent company's collection in America. The rest of the glass collection, subsumed into the holdings of sister-company, Edinburgh Crystal, is on loan to the Broadfield House Glass Museum and is accessible for scholastic research. Documentary archive material including pattern books, is on loan to Dudley Public Library (West Midlands), but is held in store. Broadfield House Glass Museum, Dudley Art Gallery and Museum (who administer the Broadfield House Museum) and Dudley Public Library are all in turn administered by the same body: Dudley Leisure Services, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. I am grateful to Roger Dodsworth, Keeper of Glass at Broadfield House for this information.

[11] For a short contextualised account of the glass side of the experiment see Stuart's archivist, Christine Golledge's, 'Stuart and Sons Ltd (1918 – 1939)', in (ed Roger Dodsworth) *British Glass Between the Wars*, (exhibition catalogue), Broadfield House Glass Museum, 1987, pp 28 -

were manufactured for display at Harrods in 1934. Glass objects from that exhibition, including items designed by Paul Nash, Eric Ravilious, Graham Sutherland and Laura Knight, were retained by Stuart Crystal in its museum collection so I was able to study them at first hand alongside relevant correspondences and artists' sketches.
The Stuart archive relating to the 1934 Harrod's Exhibition is now kept at the Wedgwood Museum in Barlaston. The main Stuart pattern books are there also, but Broadfield House Glass Museum also holds some Stuart archive material.

Walsh Walsh Ltd.

Walsh Walsh's archive is available for study at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. It contains pattern books, promotional material and other documentation pertaining to the Birmingham-based firm which closed down in 1951. The archive contained two Walsh Walsh pattern books of the period. The range of designs in those books showed it specialised in high quality but conventional cut glass and also in architectural light fittings and decorative architectural panels of a moderne character suited to hotels and ocean liners. That duality of innovatory design continued through the1930s when Clyne Farquharson was employed to design modern ranges for the firm.

Retailers

Gordon Russell Ltd.

Stevens and Williams had a long-standing relationship with Gordon Russell of Broadway as the firm manufactured the 'Gordon Russell Table Glass' range, exclusive to Gordon Russell Ltd. During the 1930s, Murray created a table service, 'Lygon', as an addition to the Russell range. The archive includes a promotional brochure from the 1930s showing the whole range of designs, including *Lygon.* The latter showed Murray's sensitive interpretation of traditional English (i.e lead crystal) glass making) whereas other pictorial material in the archive showed Murray's work in a more Modern idiom.

Russell's retained an extensive photographic record of its showrooms and displays featured in both its London store and at its Broadway showrooms dating from the 1930s. Many of these record room-sets and exhibition interiors designed to display particular ranges of Gordon Russell furniture, the majority of which are accessorised with lamps, vases, ashtrays and other domestic items sold through the showrooms. The photographic record shows that many of the Modernist accessories in glass, ceramics and metal retailed and displayed in the Russell showrooms were designed by Keith Murray.

The firm's historic collection contains several examples of vases and bowls designed by Murray and produced by Wedgwood in a Matt Straw glaze. Details of the archive can now be obtained from: The Gordon Russell Trust, The Old Silk Mill, Sheep Street, Chipping Camden, Gloucs.

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31. Note that the catalogue has an illustrated section devoted to 'The Harrod's Exhibition 1934', which shows many of the glass items made by Stuart for the 1934 exhibition (most of which were still in the firm's own collection). See 'The Harrod's Exhibition 1934', pp 93 -96.

2.

Primary sources in Sweden

.A research visit to Sweden identified important archive material for this study firstly in the Småland region known as the 'Kingdom of Glass' (home to most of the country's glass factories) and secondly in and around the city of Stockholm.

Swedish Glass Museum

Småland Museum in the town of Växjo is an important centre for the study of Swedish glass, most notably the **Swedish Glass Museum** which houses Sweden's largest public collection of national glass. This comprehensive collection represents many local firms as well as nationally and internationally known Swedish glass designers and manufacturers. Its archives contain important drawings by designer Edward Hald, including preliminary sketches which indicate how specific designs originated.

Swedish Glass firms

The two largest firms: Kosta Boda and Orrefors have large displays of glass and which pay special attention to design.[12] Both have extensive archives relating to the history of the firm and the designs produced.

The **Kosta Boda** firm's archives are located at the Kosta Glasbruk (Glassworks), founded in 1742. In the 1920s Kosta played a major role in the evolution and promotion of modern Swedish glass design which is seen especially in the designs of Edvin Ollers, (who designed for Kosta between 1917 and 1918, and later from 1931 to 1932); Ewald Dalskog, (1926 to 1929); and Ellis Bergh, (Art Director at Kosta from 1929 to 1950).[13] The work of these and other designers are represented in the collections and displays at the Kosta Museum. The Kosta Boda archive includes the firm's pattern books and drawings. The pattern books and glass collection were particularly useful for studying both 'modern' and 'traditional' work of the inter-war period. I was able to study 'traditional' cut glass table services, a category which has never featured in any history of twentieth century Swedish glass, and this proved useful in assessing the overall output of the firm.

Orrefors has enjoyed an international reputation since the 1920s for its Modern artistic glass. This reputation was founded on the prominence of leading artists at the firm, beginning with Simon Gate, who was employed from 1916 - 1945, and Edward Hald , employed from 1917 -1978. The collection and display at the **Orrefors Museum** reflects their contribution to a modern aesthetic for art glass and for cheaper table glass and domestic items designed for the sister firm, Sandvik. Their artistic legacy is also reflected in the chronological display of glass artefacts produced up to date by a succession of named glass artists from

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[12] Orrefor AB merged with Kosta Boda AB in 1990. The group is now known as Orrefors Kosta Boda

the Orrefors art studio. This display of artists' work is selected to reflect the finest and most distinctive work of individual artists and the high quality of craft work in the making and decoration. The archive contains documents relating to the history of the firm and its workforce, and also pattern books and original drawings. My visit to the factory and museum was important to establish both design and production methods at the firm during the inter-war period.

The **Nationalmuseum, Stockholm** houses Sweden's major public collection of national and international decorative arts (as opposed to national handicrafts). It has an extensive collection of twentieth century glass, the majority being Swedish in origin, which I was able to study both in public displays and in the museum's glass store. The collection consists, in the main, of vases, bowls and table glass which are typical of general production at the various firms as opposed to more elaborate virtuoso pieces created to promote the high standards of artistry and craftwork. Most of the pieces are by designers of international reputation, including Hald and Gate at Orrefors; Edvin Oller at Elme; Evald Dahlskog and Monica Morales Schildt at Kosta. I was able to study glass and ceramics collections which was useful to evaluate the impact of design reform ideals on factory-made ceramics and glass in Sweden, especially with regard to the employment of artists and designers in those industries.

Svensk Form Bildarkivet (library-archive), Stockholm houses the records and publications of Sweden's major design reform organisation, Svensk Form, (formerly Svenska Slöjdföreningen). Of special interest to design historians is the committee room, an authentic Modernist interior that was designed and furnished by the Swedish Functionalist Architect, Gunnar Asplund, in the early 1930s. The Modernist revamp of Svensk Form's headquarters coincided with the organisations change of name to Svensk Form and that of its journal, formerly *Svenska Slöjd Föreningens Tidskrift,* to *Form* in 1933. Bound volumes of both journals are kept in the archive. There is also a yearbook, the *Årsbok,* bound at the end of each annual volume, which, like its British counterpart, *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Arts*, assessed the best examples of contemporary design. These were useful in tracking the evolution of Swedish Modern approaches in both manufactured goods and in Swedish arts and crafts of the inter-war period. Of particular interest for this study were archive boxes of loose photographs taken of mainly Swedish displays at international exhibitions in Paris, 1925 ; Stockholm, 1930, and London,1931, which I was able to study.

Appendix III

Roger Dodsworth:

Notes of Conversations with Sam Thompson regarding Keith Murray Pattern Book.

July/August 2001

Notes of Conversations with Sam Thompson regarding Keith Murray Pattern Book.
July/August 2001

- The Keith Murray book was known as the Keith Murray Description Book. It was drawn up to provide a handy record of all the Keith Murray designs that were put into production during his time at Stevens & Williams (1932 – 1939) and to enable those designs to be costed.

- The book was compiled over the period of time that Murray was with Stevens & Williams, hence the loose-leaf format. As each design was finalised and accepted, it was given a pattern number, drawn into the book and its production details recorded in columns to the right of the drawing. All the pieces in the book were put into production in one form or other, otherwise they wouldn't have been entered into the book.

- The production details that were critical for costing and which were recorded in the book were: 1) number of pieces that could be made in six hours 2) weight of article before decoration 3) length of time it took for the decoration to be carried out. By recording these details the factory had accurate information on which to base its initial costing and any subsequent revision to the price.

- The designs were drawn into the book by Sam Thompson and Tom Jones who worked in the drawing office at Stevens & Williams. They are not Murray's drawings.

- Not all the designs in the book are by Keith Murray. The book was used to record modern-style designs by other members of the Stevens & Williams staff such as Hubert and Reginald Silvers Williams-Thomas. The designs which Sam Thompson knows are not Murray have been annotated by him in biro "Not K.M." If the company had known how significant Murray was to become, they would not have included non-Murray designs in the book.

- Not all the shapes are by Murray. He made use of some existing Stevens & Williams shapes.

- Pattern numbers were given the suffix A in order to distinguish them from any existing Stevens & Williams numbers. The numbers were started at 100 to make it look as though the Keith Murray range was already well established. There were never any numbers before 100. There was only one Keith Murray Description Book. There was never a book B.

- Any additional numbers in the book may have been estimate numbers. These were like temporary numbers that a design was given while it was being trailed, costed and considered for production.

- Some customers, eg China Craft, did not want the Keith Murray/S&W mark on the glass, which explains why some KM glass is not marked.

- Book was kept in the Drawing Office and was not used by the glassmakers or decorators. They would work from full-scale drawings.

Roger Dodsworth
Broadfield House Glass Museum

Appendix IV

Interview with Gilbert Hill

Interview; Major G. Hill and Diane Taylor 14.5.86.

D.T. Can you tell me about your early career at Stevens and Williams?

G.H. I started at Stevens and Williams at the age of 14. I had studied art and was always involved in designing articles to sell for the firm. I began to travel for the firm in 1934 and at that time there were more shops closed than open. I remember going up to Newcastle and around that area, you've got bridges interconnecting over the river, there were men sitting on their haunches side-by-side on either side of the pavements and I've never seen anything so depressing in all my life. In 1935 I wasn't taken to the British Industries Fair in London and so during that fortnight, I was sent up to the South-west of Scotland. There were no customers, I was sent up to try to find some. At that time, the Depression was so bad that Col. Williams-Thomas's father had worked out a £5 parcel, which would have consisted of one jug, one salad bowl and various other articles.

D.T. Would that have been sold as a special package or were they a set of samples?

G.H. Oh no. That was for them to sell in their shop! A lady in the shop in Kil— said, "Five pounds! I'd expect to stock the whole shop for that!" In that period we were cutting tumblers at 8s.6d. a dozen and an 8" cut glass vase would be 2s.0d.

D.T. This must have made the 'Keith Murray' pieces seem very expensive.

G.H. That is the basic problem of a traditional industry - they cannot get accepted for a break-away product. The problem is that a perfectly plain thing is more expensive than one with decoration all over because you need a perfection of the materials. Also the country is very funny in that 'tradition' is all they will buy.

D.T. Do you think that this applies particularly to the Midlands and the North?

G.H. No, Heal's, as I'm sure you will know, were one of the biggest buyers modern furniture and glass before the war. I remember going there after the war in the late 1950s when for the first time in their history they had turned over a million pounds. Just half a mile along the Tottenham Court Road was Maples. You could have dropped Heals into a fraction of that area. The sales of Modern Glass in the London stores was infinitesimal compared to the sales of cut glass.

D.T Were there different categories of cut glass, a fine grade and a cheap grade of wares at Stevens and Williams?

G.H. We had two qualities of metal but the common metal was only used for catering and Government contracts. The Thirties was such a depressed time, sometimes only two days a week were worked. We had a saying in those days that as long as we could keep the smoke going up the chimney, we stood a chance. The interpretation of that is that if you let out the furnace in a glass house it all cracks and breaks has to be rebuilt. If a manufacturer lost his capital in this way he would not be able to recover. It was a period when things were done for ridiculously low figures. Girl cutters came into their own in the thirties but they were never very successful; their incidence of breakage was far higher than a man's.

D.T. Was this because they weren't trained?

G.H. No, they were trained but the girls liked a job where they could work and talk at the same time.

D.T. How did you train for your job?

G.H. I had joined the firm when I was 14. I studied privately and I studied Art for many years with a view to teaching eventually. When I was in my early twenties the Sales Manager of the company left. That gave me the opportunity to be a Representative. From then onwards I designed practically all of the things that I used to sell. I had been all through the factory and I was the one who kept all of the records for putting in piece-work; so I eventually became the greatest authority on timings and how long it would take to cut any article or produce any article. Whilst I was travelling, I used to make notes about what people thought they could sell and so on. I used to come home and draw my designs at night, then I used to get the articles made. I would ask in the factory how much the cutting would cost and if it could not be produced competitively then it would not be done.

D.T. So you designed directly from the customers' comments?

G.H. I always held that I was the Commercial Designer. The firm has always had designers but they never had the responsibility of being commercial

D.T. Was there a studio at Royal Brierley at the time?

G.H. Yes, we always had designers.

D.T. What did they do if you were selling your own designs and Keith Murray was designing the modern glass?

G.H. Well, if they came up with anything good I would take it. I never know why I was committed to doing what I did but I did it. Where ever I've gone I've always got business - you had got to come out of the Depression of the early thirties.

D.T. How many times did you visit each town per year?

G.H. The large cities; Glasgow, Manchester and Leeds it would be three times a year and other cities it would be twice.

D.T. Would those visits usually coincide with the launch of a new range?

G.H. No, but each year, I would say in those days, that you were introducing at least a third of your thousand pieces every year. By the outbreak of the War (1939), the numbers of articles registered in the general description book had reached between sixty-nine and seventy thousand pieces. If you average that out just over a hundred years you have about 600 - 650 new registrations of designs every year.

D.T. This is something that does not happen in modern industry does it?

G.H. I think that it is coming again, there doing lots and lots of things every year these days. There used to be one phrase; people would come in and say "now what have you got new?" I would see somebody in, say Scotland where sugar and creams would sell, and there looking at this one but praising that one and the next time they would order something else all together. My argument was that nobody knew what was selling and that was why I started to analyse sales to see if I could understand people's approach.

D.T. I was very interested to read in your letter about your analysis of selling lines. Do you think it was helpful to you to do this?

G.H. Yes it did. If anybody said, "look, why are you dropping this?" I could turn round and tell them why.

D.T. You mean that you could spot trends?

G.H. Yes, but remember, you don't work 'til 2 or 3 O'clock in the morning every Monday doing all that work (unpacking and displaying stock for showroom display) just for fun. What was interesting to me was that, although we had a large range and I tried to cut it down, if you cut it down by 20%, somehow the number of pieces taken was cut down by 20%. It was a proportion, but it shows that you've got to have a number of things to sell a few.

D.T. How long did it take you to find this out?

G.H. Oh, it never ends in selling. The Glass Trade is, I would say, rather a difficult trade as against many others. There was a terrific disparity in the range of shops that you sold in pre-war times, from the little? Shops to the Elite. You see the Elite would never have the ordinary run of things, in fact they wouldn't even have your name on it. You never saw a manufacturers name on anything in Harrods or Tiffany's. What happened to the variety of these things was that everything was reserved. At one time there used to be about eight customers in Oxford Street alone and every one of them would have their own wine suites.

G.H. That contributed very much as to why everyone treasured their glass and their china because if they broke a piece they wouldn't be able to find another.

G.H. It was the same with the china. Again there was a very good reason for it because if it was reserved then nobody could compare the price which was a very, very important factor in those days.

D.T. Was that because of the price cutting?

G.H. Well, a Buyer of glass and china was an entrepreneur, he was a merchant. He bought the plums from the various manufacturers and then he sold them for what he could get for them.

D.T. So there wasn't a recommended retail price then?

G.H. Oh no. Actually, that has ruined the Buyer's prestige, a Buyer has no authority now. They were very, very powerful in those days, his merchandising ability was what made a good profit or not. The turnover in glass and china was only the same as in a Jeweller's shop - about once a year. The problem for a manufacturer in a place such as Manchester was that all the best people were either next door to each other or opposite. A Buyer would come in and take his choice and say, "you will reserve those pieces to me?" Then you would have to take your courage

in both hands and say no because you would have nothing to show the man opposite.

G.H They made their profit because the mark-ups were 150 -200%. Nobody was hurt because it was the kind of purchase which one made so rarely that you don't know the value. The variety comes in because it is the customers you are catering for. You are having to cater for so many varying standards of places, what you sell in Asprey's, you probably not be able to sell anywhere else. That is why you have to have a big range and when you rationalise your range in our industry, you rationalise your customer.

D.T. You mean that you lose your customer?

G.H. Yes, you lose your customer, because it is no use going to anybody unless you have got something to sell them.

D.T. You feel that the diversity was important?

G.H. That's what created the size of the turnover.

D.T. The point that you made in your letter that the 'Keith Murray' glass actually detracted from the sales in your territory was interesting. Could you enlarge upon it?

G.H. Some stores would look upon modern glass as something of a novelty. They may have ordered the odd piece and placed the rest of their order for traditional lines with another firm, where they might previously have given us the lion's share. The Colonel's experience with the London stores was quite different, very often they would only take the modern, so the Heal's account was seen as another string to our bow.

D.T You stated in your letter that out of a thousand pieces in your sample approximately one third were Keith Murray's designs and the resulting value of the sales of the territory amounted to approximately 5% by value. How did you arrive at these figures?

G.H. I used to analyse it. I was on commission and I made it my business to find out where my money was coming from.

D.T. Why, if it was not so profitable for you did you carry so much Keith Murray glass?

G.H. Well remember, I had to carry out the policy of the company.

D.T. Was there some conflict of interests then?

G.H. The conflicts were there because the outlets weren't there.

D.T. As you had your finger on the button as regards selling lines, did you find that you could affect what was designed? Did you find that the Management would respond to your suggestions?

G.H. I did most of my own designs.

D.T. So you had a free hand apart from having to carry the 'Keith Murray'?

G.H. I knew the history of the firm; I had gone through all the piece-work side I knew all the patterns as well as anybody; I knew the prices. When I was appointed to Sales, I got out of the existing range, the best value that I thought was possible. That was were I started from and then I went around and found out what our competitors were doing. I was influenced by a Mr Thompson, who had worked for Stevens & Williams in the early 1900's. He was doing most of the designing for Webb and Corbetts. I knew what he did and if I thought it was a very good idea, then I would follow. I had had the training to do it, both artistically and practically, in terms of the glasshouse times and cutting shop; it was a combination of the two.

D.T. Was there some conflict arising out of the situation where a London designer was brought into the company and given a good salary for part-time work?

G.H. You could say that it probably was resented because there was so much time and effort given to what was such a minimal part of the business. Possibly my feelings at the time (and still are now), that it was like fiddling while Rome was burning. Instead of giving the whole concentration to the major part of the business, they were fiddling about on the periphery.

D.T. What do you think that the directors could have done as an alternative?

G.H. They should have put their efforts wholeheartedly behind their major product which was cut glass. You have got to divert your attention if you are splitting your efforts, haven't you?

D.T. There is some conflict in evaluating designs between their commercial success and their aesthetic qualities.

G.H. I will tell you one of the biggest objections to the modern designs was that we reckon they were pinched from Sweden.

D.T. Well, they were very close to some of the Swedish designs.

G.H. No, they weren't very close; Sweden was first in the field. These were supposed to be new designs yet you could hardly tell one from the other. The second in the field never gets anywhere. I can't be specific about any of the designs now, but anything that was plain was never a British type of merchandise.

D.T. Yet the British were quite capable of making plain glass.

G.H. No, they are not capable. We don't make the glass to make it pure enough for it. You want a harder glass if you are making plain glass; one that you can fire the impurities out of.

D.T. What would the Swedes have used then? Did they not use lead crystal?

G.H. They would have used a different constitution. It was the same with Daum, the French manufacturers. You can't cut Daum glass, it's like cast iron. Now ours is a material that is made for cutting. Unfortunately, it is the most delicate glass made and the selection problem is terrific.

D.T. What do you mean by selection?

G.H. Purity, clarity - no blemishes. You look at the Swedish glass and there isn't a blemish in it. The Stourbridge glass is like a first class diamond, it's got faults in it.

D.T. When you look at Keith Murray's cut glass designs it is clear that he aiming for more simple designs.....

G.H. Well, some of those are the oldest made, aren't they. Flutes and Dutch diamonds are some of the oldest forms of cutting.

D.T. What do you mean by Dutch diamonds?

G.H. Reverse diamonds, done in a reverse pattern.

D.T. How many Salesmen were there working for the Company in the 1930's?

G.H. There were only about three. I would cover the north, there would be one covering the Midlands and Eastern Counties and one covering the south and London.

D.T. How successful were those one or two accounts who were keen to take modern glass?

G.H. Not very successful. You'd be given an order but it wasn't one that you would earn your money out of. They would be one-offs because the next time you went, they wouldn't want to buy it again,

D.T. What kind of client would have represented a good, steady account in the 1930's.

G.H. If you mean a general account there were: Whiley-Lockhead, Whiley-Hill in Glasgow, Jenners of Edinburgh, Heywards and Stevensons and Finnegans and Kendal-Milne in Manchester, Doyles and Scofields of Leeds and Hoggs of Belfast. (spellings not checked)

D.T. Would you have preferred an order composed of a lot of cheaper items or a few expensive ones?

G.H. It didn't really matter, you had to get what you were offered. You must remember that you had all your competitors against you. The same customer had seen all your local competitors and they would choose certain things from you. We did a lot of this kind of thing (points to glass vase), in many cases that would be my share of the business. You see people had such a variety of things; - you have seen the works showroom, (at Royal Brierley Crystal) well Heyward's china and glass showroom was three or four times the size of that. Those people would have three or four hundred tea sets and dinner sets for you to choose from. The selection that they carried was amazing, they were beautifully displayed and maintained. The buyer would choose items that would fit in with his display.

D.T. You related to me how you would make a display in a local hotel and invite buyers in that area to come and view an extensive range. Was that how all the firms operated? I take it that there was no knocking on doors with a suitcase of samples?

G.H. You couldn't have carried them all and you needed space to show them.

D.T. So a major buyer would have expected to see the whole range?

G.H. Oh yes, there could be as many as thirty or forty people in china and glassware in Manchester or Birmingham at a given time, so you were fighting against tremendous competition. We had a big London showroom.

D.T. Did you operate from the London showrooms at all?

G.H. No, I didn't, I closed the London showrooms after the war because we found that people never came to them. They were in High Holburn with all the other china and glass showrooms.

D.T. Could you tell me anything about protectionist measures during the 1930's? I read in the Pottery Gazette and Glass Trades Review lots of discussion about tariffs to stop certain glass imports.

G.H. I don't know anything about that. The only thing I can tell you about protection measures, and I don't know if this is pre- or post-war, is that if you had any complaint or suspicion of dumping, you had to get the law made it impossible to do anything. They would not take any action. You had got to go to your customer and get an invoice off him or get the information off him in writing to submit it. Well, who the hell was going to go to one of his customers and ask for that?

D.T. I read that the black Swedish glass was subject to tariff control, which enabled British manufacturers to produce it competitively.

G.H. I don't remember that. I think that my experience of tariff controls relates to the post-war period.

D.T. There was a great deal of fear about the inroads that Swedish glass was making into world markets and its competition against British glass, but very little evidence of how it affected the British market. Can you tell me anything about this?

G.H. Well of course, anything that comes into the country is going to take purchasing power, isn't it?

D.T. But Swedish glass was not necessarily cheap glass, was it?

G.H. Well, some was cheap. The plain I think was cheap. They made all types of glass.

D.T. They did make a plain cheap coloured glass, but would that have appealed to the same market who would have bought cut crystal?

G.H. It's a question that I couldn't answer. The idea of stopping anything coming in to any country really is to cut down foreign competition and sell your own goods more easily. That hasn't happened since the war in this country and our manufacturing has gone down. So much foreign goods have come in and people say that they are better. It is difficult to buy British-made goods now.

D.T. I think that maybe that was why the design- conscious elite were keen to push things like the 'Keith Muray' plain glass, because those people who had the taste for simple, modern styles did not find it easy to buy a British-made product.

G.H. They did not want it. A certain number only wanted it because they took a great pleasure in saying, "look what I've found, this is so-and-so. I could have sold a lot of things if they had got a Swedish mark on. There seemed to be a contempt for modern things which were made and sold by local people.

D.T. Yet groups like the D.I.A. were delighted to find well-designed products by British manufacturers.

G.H. I am not familiar with the pre-war body, but let me tell you about the product awards from the post-war body, (the Design Council). cont.

G.H. That label is known as the "kiss of death" in the trade. How many times have I had people in London thank me for telling them that a particular line has been accepted by the Design Council. They really do not display any intelligence about our industry. They want us to do something which we are no good at. We are not trained to make plain glass. We have been trained, in the Stourbridge area, to make cut crystal. that is our speciality, that is what the material is made for. The whole of our expertise is centred on it, it would not be appropriate to make anything else. The Design Council would accept that, (points to Keith Murray design with simple fluting) because it is not fussy, they would accept that as modern even though the pattern is as old as the hills, but you show them a piece with diamond-cutting and they would reject it. Younger designers feel that cut glass is old hat and they have got to revolutionise the industry. They can't integrate themselves in the industry and develop what we are good at.

D.T. Is there a continuing market for traditional cut crystal?

G.H. I am not in the market now, I'm retired, there was when I was there.

D.T. Will it always be there, do you think?

G.H. I couldn't answer that, it depends on how they handle things.

Appendix V

Interview I with Reginald Williams-Thomas

Interview (I) with Colonel Reginald Williams-Thomas. Diane Taylor 28/10/83

Q. When did you start work at Stevens and Williams?

A. 1932/33. I looked after 'The Keith Murray Glass' as it was called. Keith Murray came to us because he was impecunious. He worked at the RIBA to keep the wolf away from the door. He was about forty when I first met him (I was about twenty). To look at he was an upstanding military type of man with a tight clipped moustache. He always wore a grey flannel suit.

Q. Was there any particular reason why he always wore a grey flannel suit?

A. Well, it was because he was so impecunious. If you only have one suit, it needs to be a grey flannel one. He taught me not to waste money. He had to be careful with his.

Q. How did Keith Murray come to be commissioned to design for S&W?

A. He contacted us.

Q. Why did your father decide to employ Keith Murray?

A. We had a history of interest in design, in modern design, that is. My father did some designing- indeed it was usual in those days for the head of a firm to design. We had a drawing office, but they were really draughtsmen- they did not design. What they would do was draw out an idea for you. The principals of a firm, the works managers and the senior craft workers in the glass trade all designed from time to time- it was universal. Keith Murray contacted the firm and my father liked him. Although he was a New Zealander he seemed the typical old fashioned Englishman. Very upright.

Q. Did Keith Murray collect early English glass before he began to design glass?

A. Yes. He had a good collection. It influenced his designs- you can see it in the stemware, the bug feet and the cuttings. He gave me one or two pieces. One was Dutch. I learned a lot from him. I used to stay with him in London and also went to exhibitions with him in Brussels (1935/36) and Paris.

Q. Did Keith Murray designs help the firm through a period of economic difficulties in the 1930s?

A. Let us say they helped. But the 30s were dreadful times with the firm often working only a 2 day week. 3 days meant better times.

Q. What made your father decide that it was worth pursuing 'modern' design?

A. Well, I suppose all the trade had done since the 1914-18 war had been to cash in on prosperity and not really think too much about what was being designed. When times changed after the boom of the years 1919-30 then we thought more about design.

Q. Did the Orrefors example spur the firm on?

A. Yes. You can see the Scandinavian influence on Keith Murray, particularly on the cactus vases. You can see it in the finished and the rather deep engravings- that are clearly not from old English styles. Keith Murray work had the flavour from old English styles. Keith Murray work has the flavour of Orrefors but it is an English interpretation.

Q. Why was the design popular?

A. Well, there was the beginning of a fashion for house plants of all sorts at the time and that may account for it.
We did a lot of cactus on squat shaped vases.

Q. How did the Keith Murray work fit into other work?

A. It was separate. I ran the 'Keith Murray' section and when we showed work at the British Industries Fair, we always had a stand for Keith Murray designs.

Q. Where you a member of the DIA?

A. Yes. So was Keith Murray. He used to go to meetings. Harry Trethowan of Heals (he was their pottery and glass buyer) was very active. He looked like Lloyd George and was always broke. The most wonderful person, of course was Frank Pick. Barnaby Powell also gave us all a lot of encouragement although we were competitors. It was the first time I had ever known that. Barnaby was a gentleman- a lovely man.

Q. Why do you think he was so helpful?

A. Well he didn't see why these Swedes should make all the running. ` Whitefrairs had been making plain glass for some time so they had to change less than we did.

Q. Were the Keith Murray pieces produced by mass production?

A. All the work was hand work- every piece, You can not say we really had machinery here until a few years ago. Everything was craft work except casing- and we never used it.
Certain Keith Murray work was done in batches- about a couple of dozen at a time. He used all the facilities of the firm- cutting, mould blowing, enamelling, engraving, etc. (He checked with the production department to see if designs with bold deep cuttings were easy to produce by machine and was told that the deep cuts require precision and longer working).

Q. Which colours were used?

A. Old gold and green. The bottle green was very popular. It aimed to look like old English glass and (points to green glass in many different shades) you can see how different it was from most of the greens used in the glass trade at that time.

Q. Which designs were most successful?

A. Well- he was never very successful with stemware and when he did stemware he usually used a large foot. The trumpet foot is good (no. 368+) and he designed a decanter (165) for my wedding. 361 (old pattern no.144) was my decanter. I use it every day. It would have cost 37/6d or something like that and therefore would have sold for less than £5 in the shops.
370- a good decanter.
Keith Murray's patterns were architectural. They were bold and chunky. There was never anything pernickety about them. He referred to the normal cut crystal as "Death by a Thousand Cuts". Yet patterns were of dancing girls etc.
Another good Keith Murray pattern was the one for the Duke of Gloucester. In 1934 he designed a decanter for my father and one for me. I think he is a greatly under-rated designer- a most modest man.

Q. How was he reimbursed by the firm for his work?

A. He got expenses per visit and a retainer. He was paid about £700 per annum (which was about twice a parson's annual stipend) but he only worked for us for what would be about a quarter of the year.

Q. Was he paid royalties on his designs?

A. No. Expenses per visit and a retainer.
We would say we felt we needed a new range or we were weak on decanters or stemware and he would come up with designs.

Q. Why did he give up this design work?

A. It was to do with the Wedgwood factory- then came the war.

Q. Why do you think he did not continue with his design work, even in his spare time after the war?

A. I really don't know but it is a shame that he did not.

Appendix VI

Interview II with Reginald Williams-Thomas

Interview (II), Col Reginald Williams-Thomas and Diane Taylor, (14 May 1986)

D.T. How did Stevens and Williams Glass rank generally in terms of its retail price and exclusivity - it seems to have been amongst the most expensive of the English glass?

R.W.T. (no reply)

D.T. For example, even the 'Keith Murray' plain designs seem to have been more expensive than Webb's plain, modern designs.

R.W.T. I can't remember Webb's doing much like that at that very moment. Powell's were the people (Whitefriars), who we reckoned at that time we were really comparable with.

D.T. By about 1935 there were signs that other firms were following your example with modern glass.

R.W.T. Certainly Webb-Corbett were a bit with Eric Ravilious and Stuarts with their little tribe of painters.

D.T. When Keith Murray first visited the firm did he have a range of designs to show your father?

R.W.T. Yes, I think that quite a few of the first batch in the Green Book were in the original batch of designs which he brought to show us.

D.T. So he already had some ability (as a designer of glass)?

R.W.T. Yes, they had been going round in his head and of course, he was terribly interested in Old English glass. I remember he used to lecture me about how miserable our wine glasses had become. He thought that they had too small feet.

D.T. Do you know what convinced your father that Keith Murray was the right man for the job?

R.W.T. It's very hard to say because we hadn't really been looking for an outside designer to come and help us. It was really, I think, through Harry Trethowan of Heal's.

D.T. Do you think that in some ways your father might have been browbeaten into it?

R.W.T. Well not really brow-beaten. I think when he'd met Keith and seen some of his work he was duly impressed.

D.T. Especially having seen the modern Swedish design?

R.W.T. This is right.

D.T. There is no question to my mind that Keith Murray was very much taken by Swedish design. What are your feelings about this?

R.W.T. I always had the feeling that there were three things that interested Keith; (i) his architectural training and ability, (ii) Old English glass and (iii) what the Swedes had done. Those were the three things but, in the mix, it came out as something that really was different, partly because we made glass differently to the Swedes I think.

D.T. Do you know anything about Keith Murray's architectural career before or during the 1930s?

R.W.T. Not really because it was terribly difficult to find a job. I don't think he was able to get into anybody's private practice so he was looking for alternatives and he was terribly hard-up.

D.T. Can you remember whether he was involved in any architectural work before he got the commission for the Wedgwood factory?

R.W.T. No he hadn't had anything all the time he was working for us. It was Tom Wedgwood that set him up.

D.T. I am sure that the retainer which you paid to Keith Murray (you said it was about £700.00 per year) was considered to be a great deal of money, especially during the hard times of the depression and compared to what a staff designer would have earned.

R.W.T. Yes, it would have been. It wasn't bad given the amount of time he was expected to put in for us.

D.T. Did this cause conflicts in the firm?

R.W.T. Not at all. They did not know - it was all private.

D.T. Was there some resentment that a London chap was brought in to make designs?

R.W.T. No.

D.T. Do you think that was because you both worked closely together?

R.W.T. It could have been and, of course, the fact that he only worked part-time. You see he was never full-time.

D.T. Did your father or the management generally think that this sum was worth-while?

R.W.T. Dad did.

D.T. Why?

R.W.T. Image. PR.

D.T. It puzzled me that although the 'Keith Murray' glass was not so successful, nevertheless your father continued with him throughout the 1930s.

R.W.T. Don't forget that in those days there were very few accurate costings and it was another line. The PR was good, there's no doubt about that!

D.T. Did that PR help the sales or the image of the company generally?

R.W.T. Yes, I think it did and as I've told you, a Works Manager nicked some of these ideas and turned them into commercial lines for a very big wholesaler.

D.T. Do you think then that given greater co-operation between your Sales outlets and your Works team, you could have perhaps got Keith Murray to make more designs for the general market?

R.W.T. No, he wouldn't have done it.

D.T. Well how did this man manage to do it then?

R.W.T. They were pretty different adaptations!

D.T. There is a good deal of debate as to whether the 'Keith Murray' Glass failed in the market place; a lot of people would like to think that it did. Can you say whether the Management believed it that it was successful?

R.W.T. I think all I can say is that we stuck to it for quite a few years didn't we and because of that it was obviously very worthwhile to us. If I tell you that, in London there were four stores that were stocking

Gordon Russells. Fortnums (and Masons) - Harrod's didn't, we weren't 'in' with Harrods very much in those days. I think that Liberty's did...
...I wish that I could remember the name of that Swedish firm just opposite Asprey's in Bond Street - I think they are still there. It was interesting that it should be in a Swedish shop.

D.T. Did you export any 'Keith Murray' to Sweden by any chance?

R.W.T. No, not that I remember. We did export some to Hardy Brothers in Australia and a bit to Canada but not to America. We weren't too strong in America in the '30s, it was hopeless.

D.T. Can you tell me anything about Trade Barriers or Protectionism in the 1930's? There was a lot of talk about tarrifs.

R.W.T. We were working only 2 or 3 days a week here, so one supported anything which would help British trade and we were all out for getting tariffs on cheap, foreign glass - not so much the Swedish.

D.T. The number of designs in the 'Keith Murray' book suggest that he was making about 150 new designs a year for Stevens & Williams, do you know whether all of those would have been produced or would they have been at the prototype stage?

D.T. The number of different designs in the 'Keith Murray' book suggests that he was making about 150 new designs each year for the firm. Do you know if all of them were produced or would they have been at the prototype stage?

R.W.T. They would have been very much at the prototype stage I think. Once we found that they did not sell, for instance, at the British Industries Fair I used to have a separate section as long as those shelves there (points to showroom display about 25' long) entirely devoted to 'Keith Murray', and if they didn't click we'd out them and keep the ones that had gone. Not everything in the book sold.

D.T. Stevens and Williams always got a good reception at the B.I.F., both for modern and traditional glass. They enjoyed some royal patronage too didn't they?

R.W.T. Yes, Queen Mary visited the stand on more than one occasion and made some purchases. Keith Murray always came with me. The other man who was very close, it sounds strange for a competitor, was Barnaby Powell of Whitefriars. Barnaby was critical and interested. He took us to see his things and often came and had long chats with us on our stand.

D.T. Would Powells have been at the B.I.F.?

R.W.T. Yes they were. Barnaby was himself a very good designer; he did a lot of good design.

D.T. Is there any chance that some of the designs in the 'Keith Murray Description Book' were done by Staff designers and included because they were in a modern style?

R.W.T. Possibly one or two by Tom Jones might have been put in because they were that style, but I think very few

D.T. I don't think that nowadays a designer would be expected to turn out 150 designs a year.

R.W.T. They weren't all successful when they went in the book. They went in the book if samples of them were produced for costing, then they were tried on the market and those which sold well were kept. Keith was very prolific. Perhaps one gave him the idea that there was a hole in the market for something different - it might be that we didn't want any more vases because we'd got plenty, but perhaps some bowls or lily-bowls or bathroom sets, you see and then he would produce twenty or thirty designs of just that one thing.

D.T. He must have had a great interest in glass and in the glass trade to respond in that way.

R.W.T. Yes, he'd got a nice collection of old glass himself, some of which he gave to me but unfortunately I did not keep it.

D.T Do you know what period he was interested in?

R.W.T. Mainly late 18th century crystal drinking glasses. It wasn't expensive in those days.

D.T. Did Keith Murray design any of the firm's exhibitions?

R.W.T. He may have done .He certainly had a hand in designing the display of his first range in the London showrooms. I remember that there was a lot of black and grey. The public relations were handled by a man called Louden.

D.T. Do you remember the exhibition at the Medici Galleries?

R.W.T. Yes, I remember that Murray' glass had sold so well there.

D.T. Did you meet Nikolaus Pevsner when he surveyed Stevens and Williams for his book on the industrial arts?

R.W.T. I disliked Pevsner, what he could not find out he would simply invent to fit his theory. He was part of that body who saw the decline in trade in England during the 'dirty thirties' as directly related to design. As a recently-arrived refugee he was bursting with self-confidence and I don't think this went down too well.

D.T. How important was the 'Keith Murray' range for the firm during this period?

R.W.T. The firm had always produced a wide range of products and it suited them to keep it that way. Besides cut crystal we were also producing medical glass and plain glass for railway companies etc. They never entertained the idea of going over to producing the 'Keith Murray' designs exclusively so were quite satisfied with the resulting sales, especially in London and the south.

Appendix VII

Questionnaire to Norman Wilson

QUESTIONNAIRE TO MR NORMAN WILSON, FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR OF JOSIAH WEDGWOOD & SONS LIMITED, Diane Taylor, 1983

1. COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WEDGWOOD FIRM IN THE 1920's AND 1930's?

I joined the firm in September 1927 as Works Manager of Etruria. I was a Silver Medallist in ceramics and was always interested in ceramic design. Frank Wedgwood was Chairman in 1927 and died suddenly in 1930. Josiah (his nephew) joined the firm in 1928 as business manager and became managing director after Frank's death.

2. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW THE ARCHITECT/DESIGNER KEITH MURRAY WAS INTRODUCED TO THE FIRM?

Keith Murray was recommended by friends as an excellent architectural artist who could design glass etc.

3. WAS THERE A PRECEDENT FOR USING OUTSIDE DESIGNERS?

Yes, very much so from 1769 onwards, e.g. Flaxman, George Stubbs; see 'The Story of Wedgwood'.

4. WHAT EXPERIENCE OR KNOWLEDGE OF CERAMICS PRODUCTION DID KEITH MURRAY HAVE?

None at all when he joined us.

5. DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH KEITH MURRAY WAS PAID?

I cannot remember, I imagine it would be around £500 a year (in 1935) plus a small commission on sales of his designs.

5. DID KEITH MURRAY BRING NEW IDEAS INTO THE FIRM OR DID HIS DESIGNS REFLECT A TREND TOWARDS MODERNISATION IN THE FIRM?

Chiefly the latter. After the great slump following the Wall Street Crash (1929), a simplification of design occurred, partly to eliminate the cost of excessive ornament etc. The result was renaissance of functional design, elegant shapes with the minimum of added ornament. Keith Murray's architectural straight line elevations suited this trend admirably. Keith Murray designed shapes as elevations on a drawing board, hence his architectural style of ceramic design.

7. KEITH MURRAY IS BEST REMEMBERED FOR HIS ANNULAR DESIGNS WITH MATT GLAZES. I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU DEVELOPED THESE MATT GLAZES IN THE 1930's. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO DO THIS? WERE THERE ANY SHORT-TERM OR LONG-TERM PROBLEMS WITH THESE GLAZES?

I fear this is not so. Annular shape was designed by Tom Wedgwood and the Art Director John Goodwin. It has obvious similarities with Keith Murray ornamental ware. I invented and produced all Wedgwood matt glazes. These were so popular on ornamental ware, viz Keith Murray, John Skeaping animals etc, that we used the glazes for tableware with platinum decoration. This matt glazed dinner ware was very attractive and popular but the matt surface was inclined to cause squeaks etc with cutlery. I refused re-introduction of matt glaze tableware after the war for this reason.
Matt glazed ornamental ware was continued as a very popular and suitable form of decoration.

8. WAS THE FACTORY AT ETRURIA CAPABLE OF ANYTHING LIKE MASS-PRODUCTION OR WAS THE WORK PROCESSED IN BATCHES OF SEVERAL DOZEN .AT A TIME?

Etruria was designed to produce tableware in bulk and ornamental ware in quite large runs. None of this was mass production except some orders made on a 2 shift basis in 1938-39.

9. KEITH MURRAY'S DESIGNS ARE OFTEN CITED AS CONFORMING TO THE 'MACHINE AESTHETIC'. IN YOUR EXPERIENCE WERE THESE DESIGNS EASIER TO PRODUCE THAN MORE CONVENTIONAL WARES? DID THEY INVOLVE MUCH HAND CRAFTMANSHIP?

I fear this is a myth. Keith Murray confined most of his designs to throwing and turning which is inevitably a slow and meticulous hand craft. Keith Murray did design a few cast pieces but these only sold in small quantities mugs, inkstands etc.

10. DID THE NEW FACTORY AT BARLASTON ALLOW FOR A MORE STREAMLINED PRODUCTION, IF SO DID KEITH MURRAY PLAY A BIG PART IN PLANNING THE PRODUCTION AREAS?

Yes, Keith Murray played an important part in the design of the building, the spacing of stanchions etc. Also the roof lighting. He however, was not acquainted with production detail. Tom Wedgwood and myself provided most of the layout with valuable criticism from Keith Murray, on traffic flow etc.

11. IN THE WEDGWOOD MUSEUM AT BARLASTON THERE ARE TWO FRAMED ARTIST'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE PROPOSED FACTORY AT BARLASTON. THE DESIGN WHICH WAS NOT EXECUTED WAS IN THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE - (OR AT ANY RATE KEITH MURRAY'S INTERPRETATION OF IT). DO YOU KNOW WHY THIS SCHEME WAS NOT CHOSEN?

Keith Murray made many sketches before the factory was built; some designs were too extravagant of space and were too expensive for the funds available. The actual building finished in 1939 had a blank south elevation, i.e. corrugated sheeting with no windows. This south front was designed as a temporary wall for future extension. This extension was added after the war and now forms the glazed south elevation.

12. BOTH KEITH MURRAY AND THE WEDGWOOD FIRM WAS INVOLVED IN THE D I A (DESIGNS-INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION) IN THE 1930's. COULD YOU ASSESS THE VALUE OF THIS RELATIONSHIP, OR ADD ANY PERSONAL REMINISCENCES?

We supported all associations and bodies interested in good design. The DIA like the later Design Centre, was an excellent organisation. In the 1930's perhaps too much emphasis was placed on fitness for purpose to the detriment of some degree of sensible ornamentation. As I have mentioned earlier, this over-simplification was born of the need for economic production. Another puritanical fad of the 1930's was to try and make people buy what we considered to be good design rather than what they liked and wanted.

13. DO YOU KNOW WHY KEITH MURRAY WAS NOT INVOLVED IN DESIGN AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR? DID THE WEDGWOOD FIRM REGRET THIS PARTING OF THE WAYS?

As previously explained, Keith Murray became involved in very lucrative airport building enterprises and thus had no time for ceramic designing. We regretted this but agreed with Keith Murray that he had probably shot his bolt by 1939.

14. ALTHOUGH HE IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS PLAIN OR TWO-TONE WARES. I HAVE SEEN SOME DECORATED PIECES, ESPECIALLY TABLE-WARES DESIGNED BY KEITH MURRAY. DO YOU KNOW WHAT HIS ATTITUDE WAS TOWARDS DECORATIVE WARES?

Keith Murray was not happy with graphic decoration on tableware, in the same way that he wore grey worsted suitings (not because he had been hard up but because he liked grey suits) he disliked anything florid or complicated. He really preferred his architectural ceramics, plain and unadorned.

Two tone ware

This was an old Wedgwood Jasper technique which I adapted to tableware in the early 1930's. This two tone earthenware was a great success - Summer Sky, Harvest Moon, Wintergreen etc. Keith Murray designed his first shapes in plain cream colour with the normal shiny glaze. The clean cut architectural shapes were attractive but real popularity came when the shapes were produced in matt glazes, viz matt White, Matt Straw, Matt Green, Elephant Grey etc. The two colour body effects were equally popular.

15. DO YOU HAVE ANY PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF THE MAN THAT YOU COULD TELL ME? I WOULD BE INTERESTED TO HEAR OF ANY.

Keith Murray was a highly intelligent man and a first class architect. He was also a first-class organiser and administrator and in this capacity he was of inestimable value in designing the Barlaston factory. He was a man of extremely fastidious character, exactly like his designs in ceramics and his buildings. He was very reserved to people he did not know or did not wish to know, but a very loyal and warm friend and colleague, very humorous with intimates and irascible when confronted by ill-informed chatter.

Diane Taylor, 1983

Appendix VIII

Interview with Harry Walker

INTERVIEW WITH HARRY WALKER, EX-EMPLOYEE OF JOSIAH WEDGWOOD & SONS LTD (21.2.84)

D.T. When did you come to work at the firm? Were you Works Manager?

H.W. I came to work for Wedgwood at Barlaston in 1947. In the 1950's I was, amongst other things, Pottery Manager. I worked on the production of Keith Murray pieces in Queensware, Black Basaltes, coloured slip and glazes, well into the 1950s.

D.T. Were these pieces mass produced in the 1940s and 50s?

H.W. For the most part they relied heavily on skilled hard craftsmanship, throwing and turning. The Keith Murray beer mugs were produced in their thousands. They were a popular sales item and also were popular with the employees who used the 'seconds' as tea mugs! This was because there were so many 'seconds', as although the mug was formed on a jolley, the bands or incised decoration were engine turned. This was a skilled, precision technique by comparison with jolleying, so there were many losses in the turning department.

D.T. Were many other of the Keith Murray pieces adapted to mass production techniques?

H.W. Not many, although some of the pieces which were designed for throwing in the 1930's might have been jollied or cast after the war.

D.T. But these techniques were available in the 1930s, there is a directive from J Wedgwood V in 1933 asking Keith Murray to prepare designs for casting techniques with a view to cheaper production.

H.W. Slip casting was developed in the mid-thirties, but it was not a fully developed technology, in fact it is still developing even today. There were a lot of problems in terms of shrinkage and distortion. I was involved in developing the technology in the 1950s. At this stage, the Wedgwood chemists and technicians were pioneers in the industry. In fact the British Ceramics Research Institute (B.C.R.I.) were interested in our work in this field.

D.T. I had understood that Wedgwood had pioneered casting techniques since the 18th century?

H.W. Yes, it is true that water-slip casting had been used for moulded wares. However, this process had its faults. With modern casting we have reduced the water content of the slip. For example, average water-slip weighed 27oz to the pint which would have contained about 12 oz dry materials. Modern slip would weigh 36oz to the pint giving roughly 27oz of dry material. This gives a much thicker, denser body. The scientific term for this is 'defloculation'.

D.T. Was mould making an expensive operation in the 1930s? I understand that moulds were made of plaster of Paris which would not have required precision engineering to cut as would metal moulds.

H.W. On the contrary, mould making was and is a highly skilled operation, requiring precision tools to make a perfect mould. It is a costly operation requiring the skills of a mould maker.

D.T. What other machine processes were used at Wedgwood in the 1930's?

H.W. Well, cups and bowls could be jolleyed rather than turned. This was considerably quicker then turning, but was still a hand operation. For example, a thrower could probably make about 200 of the Keith Murray beer mugs per day with probably a high number of losses, whereas the same mug, when it was produced on a jolley in the 1950's, would have been turned out at the rate of about a thousand per day, which would have made it considerably cheaper.

D.T. Could this mug be produced today?

H.W. Not in any quantity, as there are only two turners left at Barlaston, whereas there were about 40 or 50 in the 1950's.

D.T. Incised turning was a favourite form of ornamentation of Keith Murray, but it was a precise and time consuming operation. Would it not have been cheaper to make wares with transfer printed decoration?

H.W. The development of silk screen printing into ceramics in the 1970's has made this a simple and inexpensive form of decoration. However, the offset lithographic transfers used before this involved preparation, sizing and cutting etc. So it is not surprising to learn that there were still many hand paintresses in the 1950's and 60's.

D.T. What other changes has there been in the firm's production methods since the war?

H.W. There have been indirect changes such as the development of Tungsten Carbide which makes for better tooling. The most significant development in the pottery industry in terms of production has been the roller machine. This is an automatic jolley with an applied pressure of 2000 tons per square inch. An unskilled man can turn out up to 4000 pieces of flatwear (saucers and plates) per day. However, it requires a highly skilled technician to set the machine up. The improved processes of casting, jolleying and rolling have revolutionised production and have made hand-throwing a redundant process at modern Wedgwood. There is now only one skilled thrower on the staff as opposed to about a dozen in the 1950,'s. He still makes some Jasper ware pieces by hand. Most of the wares produced today are China, only a small proportion are the traditional creamwares.

D.T. I am surprised by this. I would have expected a company committed to mass production techniques to use a cheaper material.

H.W. Wedgwood have maintained the idea of the high quality product since the 18th century. This was achieved 'in the 1930's wilh shapes which resembled 18th-century models. These shapes had to be modified for economic reasons after the war and the cups and tea and coffee pots in particular which incorporated a foot had to be re-styled. For example a small footed egg cup would cost more to make than a 10" plate. The exception to this would be in wares with expensive decoration, where the egg-cup would be less expensive than the plate. Keith Murray's designs were in the special category of hand-made or highly-finished goods which upheld Wedgwood's reputation for quality and innovative design. They were often difficult to make and were costly and were certainly in advance of the mass-production techniques.

D.T. Do the manufacturing techniques at Wedgwood influence the design of goods today?

H.W. Yes, modern shapes are designed to be produced economically on high-speed machines. If a shape cannot be produced economically it will be dropped after a year or so. This is bad from a financial point of view as it can cost £100,000 to develop and market a new shape. It would not be economically viable to design shapes like the 'Edme' Creamware. Although it is in production (since 1909) it would be-too expensive to design and produce such a range from scratch. There are about 100 different pieces, plus all the various cast decorations.

After the interview Mr Walker showed me his own shape book (1940s and 1950s) which showed the range of Keith Murray pieces still in production after the war. He allowed me to take copies. The letters above the shapes referred to the method of manufacture which I carried from his book.

c - cast
t - thrown on wheel
tt - thrown and turned on lathe
j - jolleyed
jt - jolleyed and turned

Diane Taylor
February 1984

Appendix IX

Table showing principal 1930s exhibitions that featured examples of Keith Murray's designs in three media

Appendix IX

Table (incomplete) showing principal exhibitions that featured examples of Keith Murray's designs in glass, ceramics and /or metal contemporary to the period in which his designs were in production (c 1932 – c.1951)

(NB this list is not a finite list – it contains examples for which there is documentation, especially in the form of prizes, exhibition catalogues and/ or published reviews.)

Year	Exhibition	Type	Glass	Ceramic	Metal	Dissemination
1932	*Copenhagen*	International Exhibition of contemporary British design	KM glass for S & W			Murray awarded gold medal for glass design. Reported in *The Times,* 1932
!933 Jan	London	Launch to the glass buyers and stores	KM glass for S & W			*Studio,* Jan 1933
1933	*Industrial Art in Relation to the Home,* Dorland Hall	National / didactic	KM glass for S & W	KM designs for Wedgwood		Published catalogue with prices. Journal reviews
1933	Barrow Stores, Birmingham	In-store designer promotion for Wedgwood		KM designs for Wedgwood		Mentioned in 'Notes to Travellers', Wedgwood Museum and Archive
1933	Barrow Stores, Birmingham	In-store designer promotion for Stevens & Williams	KM glass for S & W			Small printed catalogue (copy in *K.M. Travelling Exhibition* file, Department of Ceramics &Glass, Victoria & Albert Museum, London .
1933 Nov - Dec	*John Lewis, Oxford Street / Peter Jones, London*	In-store designer promotion for Wedgwood		KM designs for Wedgwood		Wedgwood published illustrated brochure with prices. Announced in *Design For Today,* Dec 1933

Year	Exhibition	Type	Glass	Ceramic	Metal	Dissemination
1933	*5th Trieniale*, Milan	International art and design	KM glass for S & W	KM designs for Wedgwood		Murray awarded gold medal for design. Mentioned in *PGGTR*
1934	*Contemporary Industrial design in the Home*, Dorland Hall	National / didactic / commercial		KM designs for Wedgwood		Published catalogue with retail prices of display items
1935	*Art & Industry*	National / didactic /	KM glass for S & W	KM designs for Wedgwood	KM designs for Mappin & Webb	Published catalogue with retail prices of display items
1935	*Glass, Pottery & Silver designed by Keith Murray, ARIBA*	One-man show at the Medici Galleries, London	KM glass for S & W	KM designs for Wedgwood	KM designs for Mappin & Webb	Small printed catalogue with retail prices. Reviewed by M.L. Anderson, 'Industrial Design in Three Materials', *Design For Today, 3,* Aug, 1935, pp 318 - 320
1935	*Brussels*	International Exhibition of contemporary Design and manufactures	KM glass for S & W	KM	KM designs for Mappin & Webb	- 'Art of the Table – designs in the public eye: Examples from the Brussels Exhibition', *The Studio, CX, 1935, pp 88 – 95*
1935	*English Pottery, Old & New*	Victoria & Albert Museum ceramics exhibition		KM designs for Wedgwood		Catalogue published in 1936 by the Board of Education Review article, Geoffrey Grigson,'English Pottery', *Studio, CX,* pp 256 -264
1936	*Wedgwood 1936*	Commercial design exhibition and promotion		KM designs for Wedgwood		Printed brochure with illustrations, catalogue details and prices. Reviewed in *PGGTR*
1936	*Everyday Things*	Didactic (RIBA)	KM glass for S & W	KM designs for Wedgwood	KM designs for Mappin & Webb	Exhibition catalogue and illustrated review in *Design For Today,* April 1936, pp 144 -153

Year	Exhibition	Type	Glass	Ceramic	Metal	Dissemination
1936	*DIA exhibition at Dunn's of Bromley*	In store didactic display of exemplary designs for the home		KM designs for Wedgwood		Reviewed in *Design For Today*, June 1936, pp 246 – 7 (mentions designs by Keith Murray)
1937	*Paris*	International - Murray's designs were chosen to accessorise a furnished week-end house designed and fitted by R.D. Russell for Gordon Russell Ltd. This exhibit was the principal set-piece in the British pavilion.	KM glass for S & W	KM designs for Wedgwood	KM designs for Mappin & Webb	
1946	*Britain Can Make It* (Council of Industrial Design)	National Exhibition to promote British design and manufacture in the post-war period		KM designs for Wedgwood		
1951	*Festival of Britain*	National exhibition of design and technology		KM designs for Wedgwood		

Appendix X

Studio articles pertaining to Swedish & American Design

Appendix X

Some article titles from the *The Studio* pertaining to (1) Scandinavian design and (2) to American design are listed below. (Note that there are many other instances where Scandinavian and/or American designs were discussed or illustrated in more general reviews or surveys):

1.

'Living Shipshape – the Lesson of the Stockholm Exhibition 1930', 1930

C.G. Holme, 'Copenhagen Porcelain', 1931

Helmuth Duve, 'The Modern House as Sweden Sees It', 1931

'The Swedish Exhibition of Industrial Arts and Crafts', 1931

Arne Otto Skold, 'Swedish Arts and Crafts at the Chicago Fair, 1933

E.J. Bigg, 'Art and Mass Production in Sweden', 1933

Review: 'Heal's Light and Glass Exhibition', 1934. (Orrefors exhibits singled out for praise)

'Swedish Applied Art', 1935

Oscar Benson, 'George Jensen', 1935 (in memorium)

'The Art of Denmark', 1936

Review: 'Decorative Design in Sweden and Denmark (seen at two recent London Exhibitions)', 1937

'Modern Norwegian Glass', 1938

'New Silverware in the Jensen Tradition', 1939

2.

Editorial: 'The *The Studio* – Link Between Europe and America' 1932 (announcement re the opening of an editorial office in New York)

'Steuben Glass', 1935

'Designers of Today: Russel Wright', 1935

'New Table Glass in Europe and America', 1938

Appendix XI

Table analysing incidence and content of Modernist-style display ads for domestic glass and ceramics in *PGGTR* in the 1930s

Content analysis

This appendix presents tabulated evidence of the incidence of Modernist style display ads as below:

Table A showing details of modern-style advertisements in ***PGGTR*** 1933 -1940 featuring modern **glass** designs and/or referring to named designers but **Not Keith Murray or Stevens & Williams**
And

Table B showing details of modern-style advertisements in ***PGGTR*** 1933 -1940 featuring modern pottery designs and/or referring to named designers but **Not Keith Murray**

Preliminary findings:

A - Glass

- 25 different display ads featuring 'modern' glass and presenting the glass in a Modernist-inspired graphic layout
- 7 included the designer's name in the caption or copy
- 6 out of 7 incidences named staff designers
- A total of four firms advertised 'modern' glass
- Only 1 named a freelance artist – (Homery Folkes for Thomas Webb)
- Cross referencing to Appendix XII – during the same period S& W placed 14 ads for 'modern' glass in the same journal

B – Ceramics

- 33 different display ads featuring 'modern' pottery and presenting the products in a Modernist-inspired graphic layout
- 16 included the designer's name in the caption or copy
- 15 of those ads were for Wedgwood products (but not by Keith Murray)
- The other 1 was for 'Susie Cooper' ware manufactured by the Susie Cooper Pottery
- Out of the 15 Wedgwood ads, 3 freelance designers were named (in 6 ads) and 2 staff designers (in 9 ads)
- Cross referencing to Appendix XII – during the same period Wedgwood placed 18 ads for Keith Murray ceramics in the same journal

Table A showing details of modern-style advertisements in ***PGGTR*** 1933 -1940 featuring modern **glass** designs and/or referring to named designers but **Not Keith Murray or Stevens & Williams**

Key
JJ = James Jobling
JPW = James Powell & Sons (Whitefriars) Ltd
S = Stuart & Sons ltd
SW = Stevens & Williams (NOT KM)
TW = Thomas Webb & Sons Ltd
TWC = Thos Webb & Corbett Ltd
WW = John Walsh Walsh Ltd

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Sept 1933	1064	SW	Modernistic crystal and cut cased designs like Ellis Berh's designs for Kosta. Modern layout to ad and mod typefaces used throughout (even for RBC trade name)	No	Announces "A special Autumn display of modern, commercial and domestic glass"
Dec 1933	1430	TWC	Modern photo ad using mod type face – showing mod range of table glass with decanter. pleasant intaglio dec.	No – No text	Forms in particular like KM's –
Dec 1933	1438	TW	Ad showing two heavy modern designs for jug and vase with simple fluted dec.	No	
Jan 1934	134 – 5	JJ	Double page spread for Pyrex		
July 1934	812	TWC	Yes	No	See Dec 1933
Oct 1934	1217	TW	Yes – mod ad featuring ex photo of mod bowl with zig-zag intaglio cut motif	Yes … "Designed by Homery Folkes, A.R.I.B.A."	Designed by freelance designer. Copy asserts: "…it combines that freshness of the modern idea with the stability of sound reputation".

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Dec 1934	1446	S	Yes modernistic bowls with complex (art deco) intaglio cut decoration signed by the designer on the photo.	Yes … "designed by *Ludwig Kny"* (the latter as facsimile signature across the bottom r corner of the photo)	No copy but mod layout dominated by Stuart Crystal logo in heavy italic script
Jan 1935	66	S	Yes	Yes	As Dec 1934
Oct 1935	1256	SW	No (traditional cut crystal items).	No – no copy	Features "Christmas specialities" – trad designs but fairly modern photo format with restrained typefaces
Nov 1935	1384	S	Yes modernistic dish and cover with zig-zag (art deco) intaglio cut decoration and beer mugs with banded pattern signed by the designer on the photo	Yes … "Designs by *Ludwig Kny"* (the latter as facsimile signature across the bottom l corner of the photo)	
Feb 1936	226	WW	Yes – mod ad with single image of large case with all-over leaf design.	Yes – caption beneath photo reads: "Designed by Clyne Farquharson" – the name in facsimile signature form	Copy details involvement of the "artist", the small team of "craftsmen" and the final signature "…on completion by the artist". Emphasise the "intrinsic beauty in reasonable ornament … avoiding austerity and rigidity". Coincides with Trade Launch of the range see 'Buyers Notes', PGGTR , Feb. 1936 p225

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Feb 1936	232	TW	Yes – photo of simple, modern footed vase with horizontal bands of mitre cutting to give optic effect	Yes – attributed to T. Pitchford (Chief staff designer)	Copy proclaims that this vase was acquired "...by the Victoria & Albert Museum for the permanent collection"
Apr 1936	530	WW	Yes – "two New Vases and a Bowl...."	Yes – "by Clyne Farquharson" the name in facsimile signature form	Details emphasised as Feb 1936
July 1936	922	TWC	Yes - Modernistic Jug and footed glass shown in mod photo ad	No – No copy	
Nov 1936	1480	SW	No (traditional cut crystal items) similar but not the same as Oct 1935 ad.	No – no copy	Fairly modern photo format with restrained typefaces as in Oct 1935 ad – note attractive table setting with fruit and flowers – depicts a lifestyle setting
April 1937	524	SW	No – ad for the Empire Bowl	No	A limited edition (1/10) coronation souvenir
June 1937	706	SW	As Nov 1936	No	
Oct 1937	1348	SW	Poorly-designed ad (like a page from a trade catalogue) featuring traditional and modernistic designs	No	"Special novelty lines for Christmas trade..." Cross ref with similar ad in *PGGTR* Sept 1937 featuring KM designs.

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
April 1938	461	JPW	Yes - photograph of mod undecorated drinking set and optic vases and dish (probably tinted glass)	No	Half-page ad, copy emphasises quality and craftsmanship (not design)
May 1938	668	SW	No - RBC ad for trad. cut crystal in *Feather* pattern	No	Quite good themed ad (one of a series – see Dec 1938 "Cocktails at 7...") This one titled "The Dinner Table..." depicting items in mocked-up table setting.
June 1938	786	SW	Conventional cut crystal vases and dish	No	"Simplify your Flower Arranging"...
Oct 1938	1312	SW	No - Conventional cut glass with some modernistic decoration (eg tumbler like a golf ball)	No	"A Man's Gift" – Xmas gift lines
Nov 1938	1438	SW	Conventional cut crystal dressing table sets -	No	"My Lady's Boudoir..." – Xmas gift lines
Dec 1938	1548	SW	Conventional cut crystal drinking sets plus large KM ashtray (no 597A)	No	"Cocktails at 7 .." Again a hint of life-style depiction, but also crowing cockerel shown in silhouette on drawn blind. Copy sates

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Jan 1939	66	SW	As May 1938		"The Dinner Table..."
Feb 1939	216	SW	3 modernistic lamps with cut decoration - not KM	No	Same ad seies as 1938 (Murray-Watson). This one titled "New Lighting Effects..."
April 1939	516	WW	Yes – fussy photo ad showing 4 mod vases representing pieces purchased by Royal visitors to the firm's stand	Yes – "This beautiful glassware forms part of a wide range designed by Clyne Farquharson NRD"	Fussy ad montages photos of 3 order forms as evidence of the Royal purchases at the BIF
May 1939	644	SW	Same as Oct 1938	No	"A Man's Gift"
Feb 1940	166	SW	No – good photo ad with traditional style cut crystal "Flora Dora"	No	

Table B showing details of modern-style advertisements in ***PGGTR*** 1933 -1940 featuring modern pottery designs and/or referring to named designers but **Not Keith Murray**

Key
EC = Elijah Cotton Ltd (Nelson pottery)
D = Denby
LP = Langley (Lovatts Potteries Ltd)
PP / CSA = Poole PotteryCarter, Stabler & Adams
RD = Royal Doulton
SC = Susie Cooper Pottery
TGG = T & G Green
W = Wedgwood (not KM)

Date	Page ref	manufacturer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Jan 1933	48	W	"Somerset on Celadon" – tableware on celadon ground with black and green motif	Yes – freelance architect - designer L.H.Bucknall A.R.I.B.A	Wedgood's ad campaign flagging new bodies, glazes and shapes (see below)
April 1933	46	W	Modernistic - 'The New Nordic Ware' note that some or all of this range was designed for Wedgwood by the Norwegian sculptor Eric Olsen	No but uses the slogan "W... a Living Tradition'	Promotes the 'new Siennese glazes'. Flags that the range is featured in the Spring advertising campaign and at the Ideal Home exhib.
Sept 1933	1099	W	DIA influence. Two modern patterns for tea & coffee sets in b. china. One a banded design, the other banded modernistic	No but uses the slogan "W... a Living Tradition'	Flags 'fitness for purpose' and the 'really competitive prices' in W's new range
Nov 1933	1273	P / CSA	'The New "Everest" ware in tones of white and grey'	No	Refers to recent Poole exhibition at the Arlington Gallery, Old Bond St London

Date	Page ref	manufacturer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Jan **1934**	27	TGG	'Blue Domino Ware' simple DIA / Swedish inspired design but poor handles on tea pot	No	Set similar to grey and white spotted set by Gustavsberg
Jan 1934	52	W	No – "Three Old Favourites" traditional but mod.style ad.	No	Copy advocates these "best sellers" because they have "...stood the test of time". Also mentions new styles to suit new tastes
Jan **1935**	47	EC	Yes. Mod / modernistic ad for plain tableware "Nelson Ware" in white or Ivory glaze	No	Fairly design conscious inexpensive wares. Undecorated designs confidently advertised in modern-ish ad format.
Jan 1935	50	RD	Yes - plain teacups in modern setting	No – no copy	V mod visual format
Jan 1935	54	W	Yes, new decorated plate ("Seasons") set shown in graphic format	Yes "by Victor Skellern, ARCA". Described as "original and inexpensive".	Flags that the 'Seasons' series "...will be shown at the Royal academy Exhibition of Industrial Art."
Feb 1935	253	W	Yes new engraved decorative dinnerware ("Wood Magic") – mod photo format	Yes "by Victor Skellern, ARCA", Wedgwood's Art Director	Flags "...on view at the Royal Academy exhibition..."
May 1935	614	W	Mod ad for simple modernised version of trad 18th century coffee set in bone china.	No	Copy emphas-ises mass appeal and affordability: "...one of the modestly priced china patterns which are proving popular all over the country."
June 1935	730	W	Yes – mod diaper pattern tea set in china: "Green Lattice"	Yes – "...designed by Millicent Taplin" (staff designer)	Flags "...Another modestly priced pattern ... selected for the Exhibition at the Royal Academy".

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Jan 1936	54	W	Yes – mod white sculpted figures	Yes – designed by Alan Best (freelance sculptor)	
Apr 1936	495	SC	Yes – table service and vases and platters	Yes – the caption is simply "Susie Cooper" (designer and manufacturer)	Modern photo ad showing SC pots in lifestyle setting – Heal's-type dining furniture and sideboard.with mod painting on wall above.
Apr 1936	512	W	Yes – mod close up photo of plain two-coloured earthenware tableware	No	Emphasise the "…new treatment of Coloured Bodies…"
Jan 1937	214	W	No – an ex announcement not an illustrated ad	No	Announces 'Special Exhibition of Wedgwood China and Earthenware' at the London showrooms (Feb 8 – 26) note that this follows on from the 1936 Wedgwood exhibition and becomes an annual trade event up to 1939)
May 1937	666	W	Mod decorative tableware (Persephone)	Yes – designed by Eric Ravilious	
July 1937	914	W	No – mod ad but traditional Queensware shape (Canberra mod floral design)	No	Copy flags traditional Queensware body and 18th century shape – "…one that is universally liked, and the price is low".
Aug 1937	1044	W	No – trad blue floral pattern (Frankenthal) on 18th C Queensware shape	No	Copy reads "…Modern Taste is Changing Again – going back once more to the flowered patterns and elegance of the 18th century."
Sept 1937	1192	W	No	No	Copy reads "… Back to the Age of Elegance – taste is swinging back to an appreciation of the beautiful 18th century Engravings of he English Countryside".

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Jan 1938	58	W	No – copy only \about the firm's long-standing history	No	Graphic design – clearly prepares the ground for the announcement of Wedgwood's move to Barlaston - see ad in Dec 1938
Feb 1938	214	W	No – announces exhibition at Wedgwood rooms	Yes, exhibition "...will be the display of new designs by Eric Ravilious, Keith Murray, Victor Skellern and Millicent Taplin."	Graphic design
May 1938	660	W	No – regency revival tableware pattern (Napoleon Ivy)	No	Copy explains: "...The recent revival of Regency motifs has drawn public attention to this – one of Wedgwood's most historically interesting patterns."
Oct 1938	1263	PP / CSA	Yes - mod photo ad with 3 images of mod lines: cocktail cups and snack tray; tea set and rectangular canapé dish	No	"Exclusive Christmas Presents..." note lifestyle inferences esp cocktail cups and accessories
Oct 1938	1279	LP	Yes – moderne and modernistic plain satin-finish vases and dishes	No but tag-lined "Artistry in Pottery"	Flags colours similar to Wedgwood's matt finishes eg "Cream vellum, Windsor Green and Duck-Egg Blue"

Date	Page ref	manufacturer	Features modern or modernistic design?	Text mentions named designer?	Comment
Dec 1938	1567	W	Mod graphic design showing drawing of the new factory	No	The holly leaf-shaped drawing of the new factory is captioned "The future home of Wedgwood from an architect's model."
March 1939	258	W	Mod floral tableware	Yes – 'Briar' by Millicent Taplin N.R.D	
April 1939	496	W	Yes –'Garden' printed pattern. Ad in graphic format	Yes - printed design "by Eric Ravilious, A.R.C.A.,NRD	"...depicted with 18th Century elegance but modern technique."
May 1939	642	W	Mod floral designs (larger scale) for vases and bowls, (Chinese Aster) on Moonstone. Ad in graphic format	Yes – Millicent Taplin N.R.D	
Sept 1939	113	W	Photo ad for 'Springtime' another larger flower motif in '...soft colours on 'Moonstone"	Yes – Millicent Taplin N.R.D	
Oct 1939	1246	W	Alphabet nursery ware	Yes – Eric Ravilious	
Dec 1939	1438	W	'The story of Wedgwood' – graphic ad with line illustrations	No	Announces the opening of the new works at Barlaston in 1940.
Dec 1940	1094	W	Graphic ad with mod line illustrations showing the new factory and site in operation.	No – simply a greeting to "our friends at Home and Overseas from Barlaston"	Sad and brave

Appendix XII

Table showing display ads featuring Murray's designs in *PGGTR* in the 1930s

Content analysis

This appendix presents tabulated evidence of the incidence of Modernist style display ads in ***PGGTR*** 1933 -1940 featuring designs in glass and ceramics by **Keith Murray** for **Stevens & Williams** and **Wedgwood**

SW = Steven & Williams

W = Wedgwood

Preliminary findings:

- 32 different display ads promoting Murray's designs in *PGTR*
- 18 of which for Wedgwood
- and of that sample 14 mention his name
- 14 (of 32) for S&W
- and of that sample 8 mention his name
- from July 1934 Wedgwood show Murray's designs in domestic scenarios / lifestyle ensembles in their display ads
- from 1936 Wedgwood present Murray's designs as coordinated accessories for the home that can be purchased individually from its Modern design ranges

Date	Page ref	manufacturer	Ill of KM design?	Text mentions Keith Murray?	Comment
Jan **1933**	54	S&W	Modern fluted decanter	Main title: "Modern English Glass designed by Keith Murray"	Invites buyers to the trade launch of the new range
Feb1933	180	S&W	Spirit decanter & bowl set	Main title: "Modern English Glass designed by Keith Murray"	Promotes firm's stand at the BIF
May 1933	584	W	Bowl in setting with 'Dorset' tableware and John Skeaping figure	"The ribbed bowl designed by Keith Murray, ARIBA, is in matt grey glaze."	
May 1933	586	S&W	Designs by Keith Murray	"...designed by Keith Murray"	
June 1933		"	"	"	
July 1933		"	"	"	
Aug 1933		"	"	"	
Aug 1933	944	W	Two modern patterns for china. One a banded design, the other 'Lotus' designed by KM	KM not mentioned	
Nov 1933	1310	W	KM vase with matt glaze finish in Christmas gift ensemble	"Modern Wedgwood vases designed by Keith Murray, A.R.I.B.A., make gifts of distinction. They are hand-thrown and turned and are obtainable in Green, White, Grey and Buff Siennese glazes with matt finish."	Christmas gift trade promotion

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Ill of KM design?	Text mentions Keith Murray?	Comment
Apr. 1934	328	W	Yes – Beer jugs & mugs and 'Liverpool' shaped jug and beakers in "...a cool green Veronese glaze" plus dessert set with vine-leaf pattern.	Yes	
July 1934	810	W	Yes	Yes "The Ink-stand, Cigarette Box, Ash Tray and...Tobacco Jar are designed by Keith Murray ...bookends ... modelled by Olsen... Duiker modelled by Skeaping..."	Main slogan: "For the Study table and shelf" Photo shows desk top with lamp and shelves behind – ie a **lifestyle setting with coordinating accessories**
Sept 1934	1064	S&W	Yes – three heavy vases/ bowls	No - no copy	Mod ad with mod typeface even for RBC trade name – note that RBC is prominent
Sept 1934	1107	W	Yes , v mod ad showing beer set	Yes – titled: "Keith Murray Beer Mugs"	Copy continues "...are hand thrown for strength and clean outline. The stain glaze, in white, grey, buff or green, gives an ideal surface for drinking. ... Each mug ... bears the designer's signature and the trade mark."
Oct 1934	1202	W	Yes	Yes	As July 1934
Nov 1934	1320	W	Yes 'Iris' patterned earthenware tableware des by KM (green and platinum) + 'Buttercup' pattern (solid platinum) (not KM	No	Flags Moonstone (Vellum White). "Special research at the Wedgwood factory has found a semi-matt glaze which is really suitable for tableware and a lovely platinum decoration that is as durable as the hardest fired enamel"

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Ill of KM design?	Text mentions Keith Murray?	Comment
March 1935	354	SW	Mod glass "Streamline" but probably not KM (poss RWT)	No – no text	
April 1935	488	W	Bowls in Moonstone and Black Basalt plus Sea Lion by Skeaping. Mod phot format depicting a table top display	Yes – attributes designs to Keith Murray and John Skeaping	"These modern Wedgwood designs were highly praised at the Royal Academy Exhibition and are all modest in price."
June 1935	734	SW	Photo ad showing Four moder/modernistic drinking sets	Yes 3 of the 4 sets are attributed to named designers as follows: "...Sherry Set by Keith Murray A.R.I.B.A. ... Lager Beer Set by H. Whitworth ... Whiskey Set in Crystal and Black by R.S. Williams-Thomas."	Caption flags "...Drinking Glasses for every occasion" and the phot shows sets for whiskey, lager, cocktails and sherry in a fairly modern format but the ad lacks the impact of close-up shots of individual designs.
Aug 1935	968	W	Yes – Beer mugs (inc moulded designs) by KM in modern ad plus Black Basalt vase	No – although they are KM designs	
Sept 1935	1122	SW	Yes – mod photo format for special plaque	Yes – "Designed by Keith Murray A.R.I.B.A" in small type below photo	A plaque engraved with motifs of architectural drawing tools designed and made for the Architectural Assn.
Sept 1935	1163	W	Yes - 2 bowls, Bronze Basalt vase and Skeaping Diuker	Yes "another attractive Keith Murray and Skeaping group."	"These modern Wedgwood designs are all moderate in cost."

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Ill of KM design?	Text mentions Keith Murray?	Comment
Feb 1936	220	SW	Mod table glass for the Queen Mary- possibly KM	No	Note to Buyers emphasises that it was "... not only design but quality and durability" that were selection criteria for the QM tableware.
March 1936	368	W	Yes – New ad format showing 8 different photos of patterns (all modernised designs).	Yes – 3 designs attributed to KM one to Millicent Taplin	Flags to dealers that these patterns will feature in 1936 advertising
June 1936	794	SW	Yes – mod table glass (designed by KM) for the RIBA Dinner Club	No- although in small print does say that it was "...specially designed..."	
July 1936	930	SW	As June 1936		
Sept 1936	1237	W	Yes – mod ad showing bowls and accessories (a writing set).	Copy announces that "the wide range of ware designed by Keith Murray has now been still further extended by the addition of a Bathroom set, a Dressing Table set and a writing set."	Promotes co-ordinated accessories that can be purchased individually or as sets for use in various settings in the home.

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Ill of KM design?	Text mentions Keith Murray?	Comment
April **1937**	514	W	Yes – Mod photo ad showing bowls,vase, jug and mugs in mod table setting. Note montage effect of mug projecting into the text area.	Yes announces "Keith Murray Ware is now obtainable in contrasting colours...."	First ad for two-toned wares (another coordinated range)
Sept 1937	1194	S&W	Yes –sherry and cocktails sets in graphic form on black background	Yes – "...new Sherry and Cocktail sets, etc., designed by Keith Murray."	This (awful) ad promotes Keith Murray designs as part of RBC's autumn/Christmas gift range. It shows a page from RBC's latest catalogue. Cross ref with similar ad in *PGGTR* Oct1937, featuring novelty gift-lines for the Christmas trade.
Oct 1937	1338	W	Yes – interesting montage of 3 photos	Yes – "Wedgwood Alpine pink, Keith Murray two-colour ware and cream-colour Keith Murray ware...."	Trade preview of Nat advertising in "... the pre-Christmas issues of the leading women's magazines."

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Ill of KM design?	Text mentions Keith Murray?	Comment
March **1938**	370	W	Yes – full page ad for two-tone wares with same photo as April 1937	Yes –"Keith Murray two-colour ware meets the growing taste for delicate colour-contrast and sensible design."	
Aug 1938	1030	SW	Yes – modernistic designs by KM	Yes – "Keith Murray and other famous designers are aiming … to combine the craftsmanship of 'Royal Brierley' … with designs suited to present day trends of interior decoration."	One of series of RBC ads see *PPPGTR* May – Dec 1938. Note that there is an agency credit 'Murray –Watson' at the bottom of this ad series

Date	Page ref	Manufact-urer	Ill of KM design?	Text mentions Keith Murray?	Comment
Sept **1939**	1120	SW	Mod/modernistic vase and bowl with engraved motifs (flying swan and old sailing boat). Poss KM –designs no 1187A & 1183A	No – but calls them "artists' creations"	Same ad format as 1937 /8/ titled "Beauty and Character"
Nov 1939	1350	W	Yes – mod bowls and vases in matt glazes	Yes – titled "New designs by Keith Murray"	Mod photo format
Nov **1940**	1022	W	Yes – mod phot ad showing 3 vases in Black Basalt	Yes – titled "Keith Murray designs in black Basalt" and the copy "… places them in the front rank of modern ceramic design".	Copy emphasises that they are "…Thrown and Turned in the traditional style" and the "…clean crispness of the forms with their simple architectural decoration".

APPENDIX NOT COPIED

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